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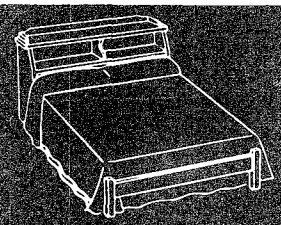

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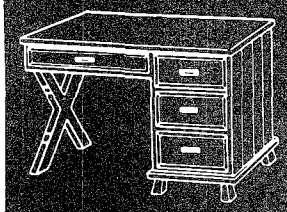

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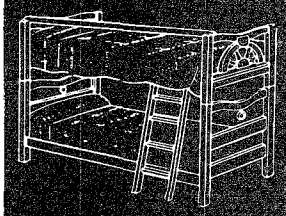

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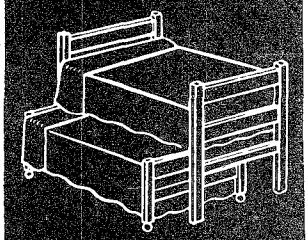

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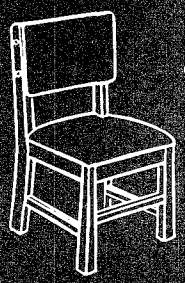

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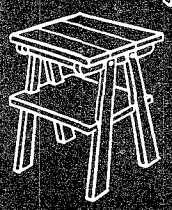

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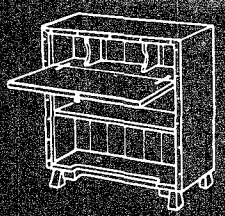

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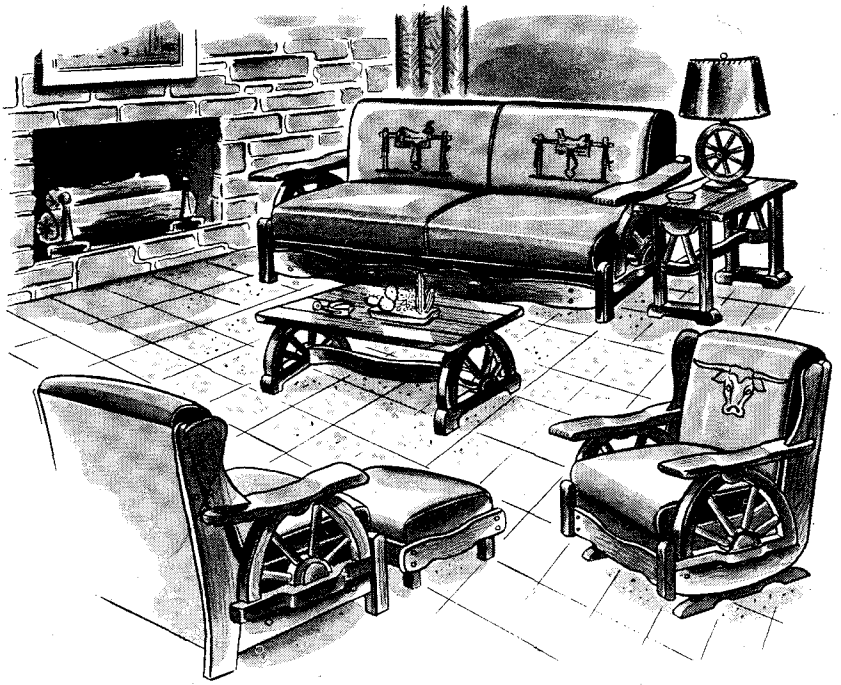

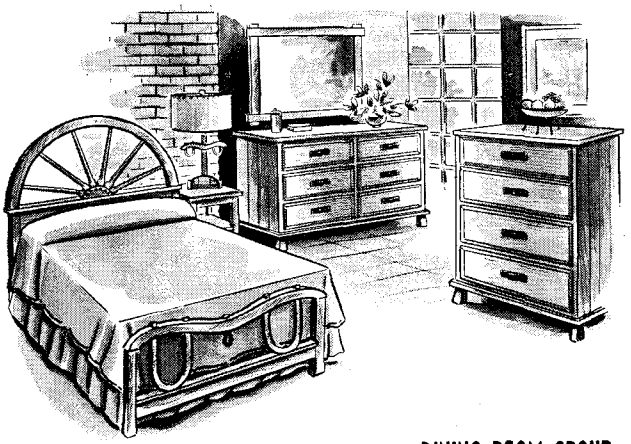

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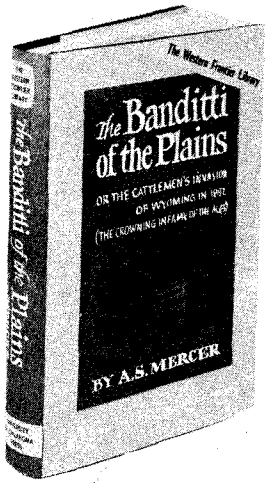

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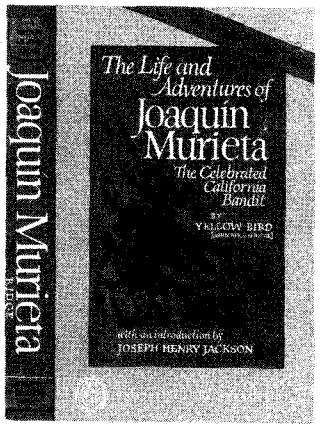

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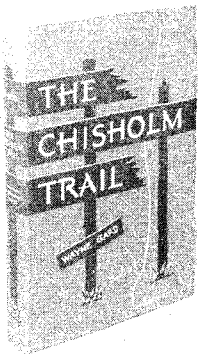

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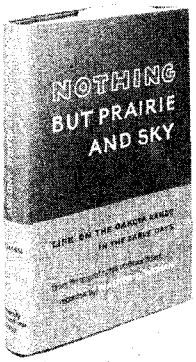

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Coming Up!

BOYS, you've got us worn down to a nub demanding more and more treasure yarns. Not only lost mine and buried gold stories either; now you want a piece on finding uranium! In the upcoming May-June issue, we're giving you an authoritative on-the-spot report of the uranium situation in the West as it is today. Once you've read it, all you'll have to do is beg, buy or borrow a Geiger counter, crawl into the old bus and head West to make your fortune. And, for gosh sakes, if you make a rich strike, don't forget TRUE WEST! We could use some folding money right well.

The Old West is full of strange true stories—but none is stranger than the story of the Army's attempt to introduce camels into the Southwest for military purposes. George J. Rawlins, Captain of Cavalry, U. S. Army, (Retired) gives us a fascinating account of the experiment in his article "Camelus Americana."

What rifle do you think helped most in opening the West? If you pick the Winchester, podner, you've picked wrong! Read Norm Wiltsey's "The Rifle that Opened the West" next issue to find out.

No issue is complete without a lost gold yarn—we live in terror of the day we'll run out of them! George Dillon's "Apache Gold" is as tense and thrilling a yarn as we've ever published.

We're mighty proud of the occasional eyewitness accounts of famous events in Western history we're able to present. Such an account is George Oaks "I Fought at Beecher's Island." Oaks, one of the scouts with Major Forsyth's command in that storied fight against 1,000 Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Sioux, told his story to C. V. Rinehart back in 1902. Oaks was one of the nine sharpshooters picked to kill Roman Nose, the great Cheyenne warrior. His brief, vivid recital of the Indians' charge and the death of Roman Nose will send the chills rippling up your spine.

One for the ladies is Mabel T. Quebedeax's "Pioneer Mother." Kidnapped by Indians, Sarah Hibbins outwits her captors and puts the Texas Rangers on their trail in as cool and courageous a display of resourcefulness as any frontiersman could show.

EVER since TRUE WEST came into existence in the summer of 1953, we have been looking for an article written by an American Indian to present the Red Man's view of things, both past and present. Such an article was hard to find, as it seems the modern American Indian is too busy with his farms, his stock-raising and his trading posts to devote any time to writing. Sam Dicke, a member of the Cheyenne tribe, is certainly busy enough with his store at El Reno, Oklahoma; yet Sam took time out to write one of the most powerful and unusual articles on his fellow people that we have ever seen. We challenge anyone to read it without acquiring an entirely new viewpoint on the Indian's role in American history. Sam calls his piece "Know the TRUTH about Indians"—and goes on to tell you things you never knew about the First Americans. Don't miss it!

Short articles include Bob and Jan Young's yarn on "Madame Moustache," famed woman gambler of the old West; Frieda and Sam Hyatt's "The Salt War of Texas"; and the inimitable George Phillips' "The Great Baptizing." If you don't get a laugh out of this one—well, you're dead, brother, that's all!

Last but never least is our Reader's Forum, TRULY WESTERN. Every debatable question gets straightened out eventually in TRULY WESTERN—and everybody has fun in the process.

There she is. See you later, Podner . . .

March-April, 1956
Volume 3 No. 4
Whole No. 14

True West

All True—All Fact—Stories of the Real West

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Cover: Mary O'Carroll

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TRUE WEST is published bi-monthly by WESTERN PUBLICATIONS, P.O. Box 5008, 709 West 19th St., Austin, Texas. Editorial Offices, Box 266, Mason, Texas. 25c per copy, $3.00 for 12 issues in the United States and Possessions. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Austin, Texas, April 22, 1953, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Columbia, Missouri. Copyright 1956, by WESTERN PUBLICATIONS.

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE: Fred R. Crawford, Jr., 638 South Van Ness Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

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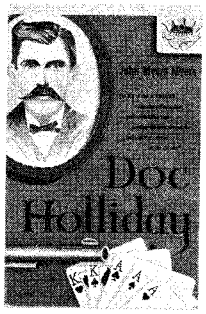

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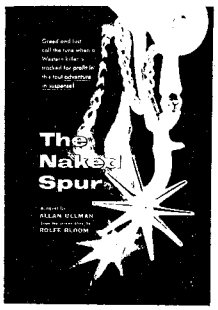

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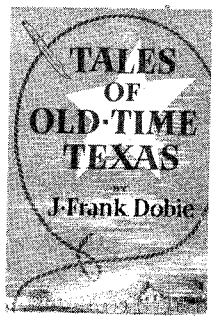

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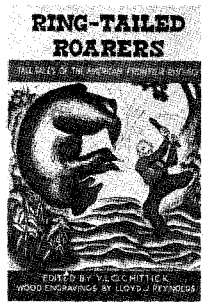

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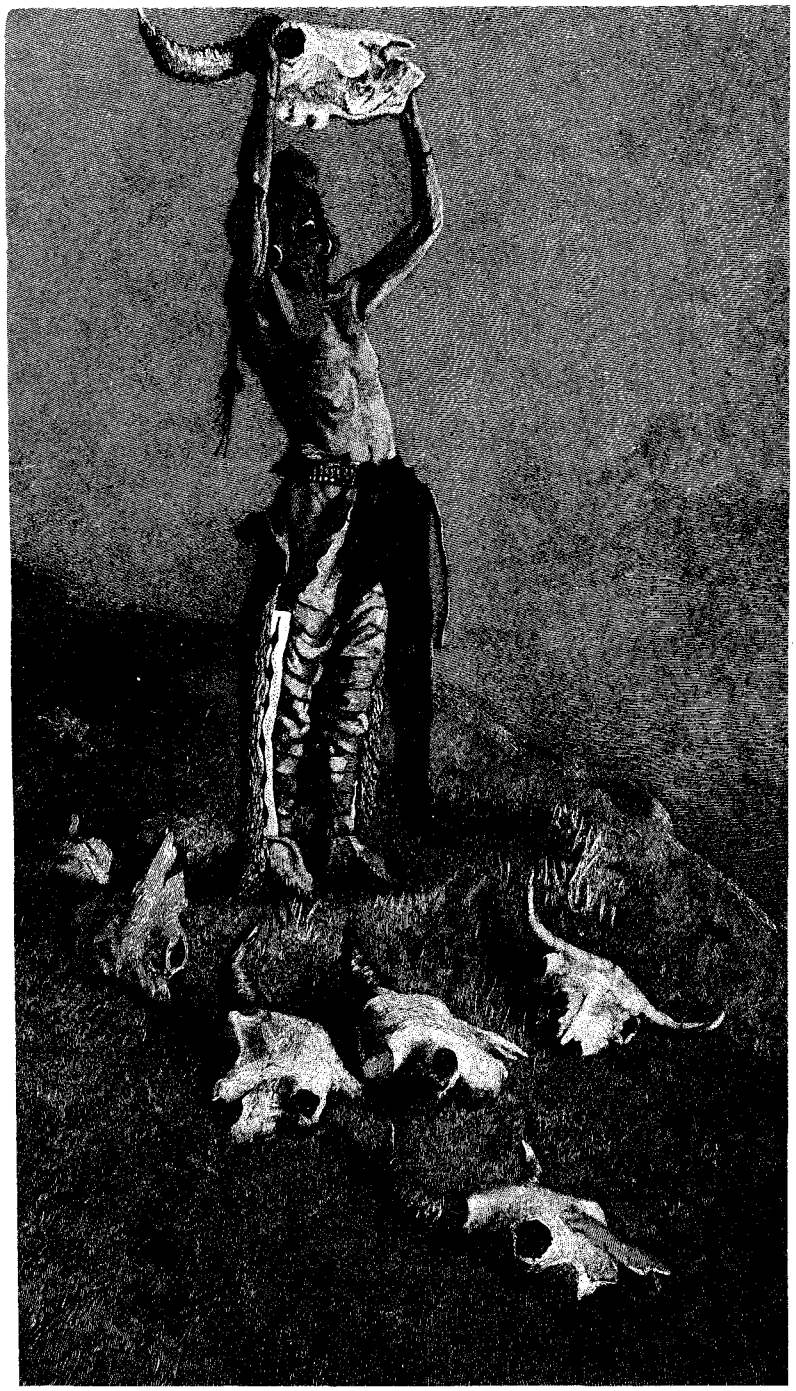

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Prayer to the Great Spirit for the return of the buffalo.

WORLD'S GREATEST SLAUGHTER!

By NORMAN B. WILTSEY

Nothing in wildlife history equals the appalling mass slaughter of the American Buffalo.

ACCORDING to scientists, the bison—popularly known as the buffalo—came to Alaska some time during the middle Pleistocene period, or roughly, about 400,000 years ago. After crossing the land bridge then existing between Asia and America, the buffalo drifted southward, fanning out as they went. Eventually they ranged in vast numbers from Great Slave Lake in Canada far down into Mexico, and from Pennsylvania to the Blue Mountains of Oregon. No accurate estimate can be made as to the numbers of these primitive, prehistoric beasts. The noted author-naturalist, Ernest Thompson Seton, after careful research set the figure at 60,000,000. Other equally qualified authorities have rated the prehistoric buffalo population at up to 75,000,000.

By 1800, through steady hunting by Indians and white settlers, the count was judged to be down to 40,000,000. Already, in 1800, the buffalo had been wiped out east of the Mississippi. The annual kill at that time was estimated at around 2,000,000. By 1850 the great Western herds had dwindled to approximately 20,000,000, and by 1895 there were only 800 survivors. Most of this melancholy remnant was in private herds. The few remaining wild ones were hunted down until only twenty remained. Never had history recorded such an appalling slaughter, such ruthless, senseless destruction of priceless natural resources. Belatedly, the horrified public prevailed upon the Government to take action to preserve the species. With time fast running out, the Government sought to improve upon inadequate protective laws and the buffalo was saved for posterity.

Dodge City, Kansas, 1877, showing the stores, dance hall, and wagons loaded with buffalo hides just in from the ranges.

Frontier Pix

Illustrated by

Young Bill Cody took off afoot, with the bull snort-

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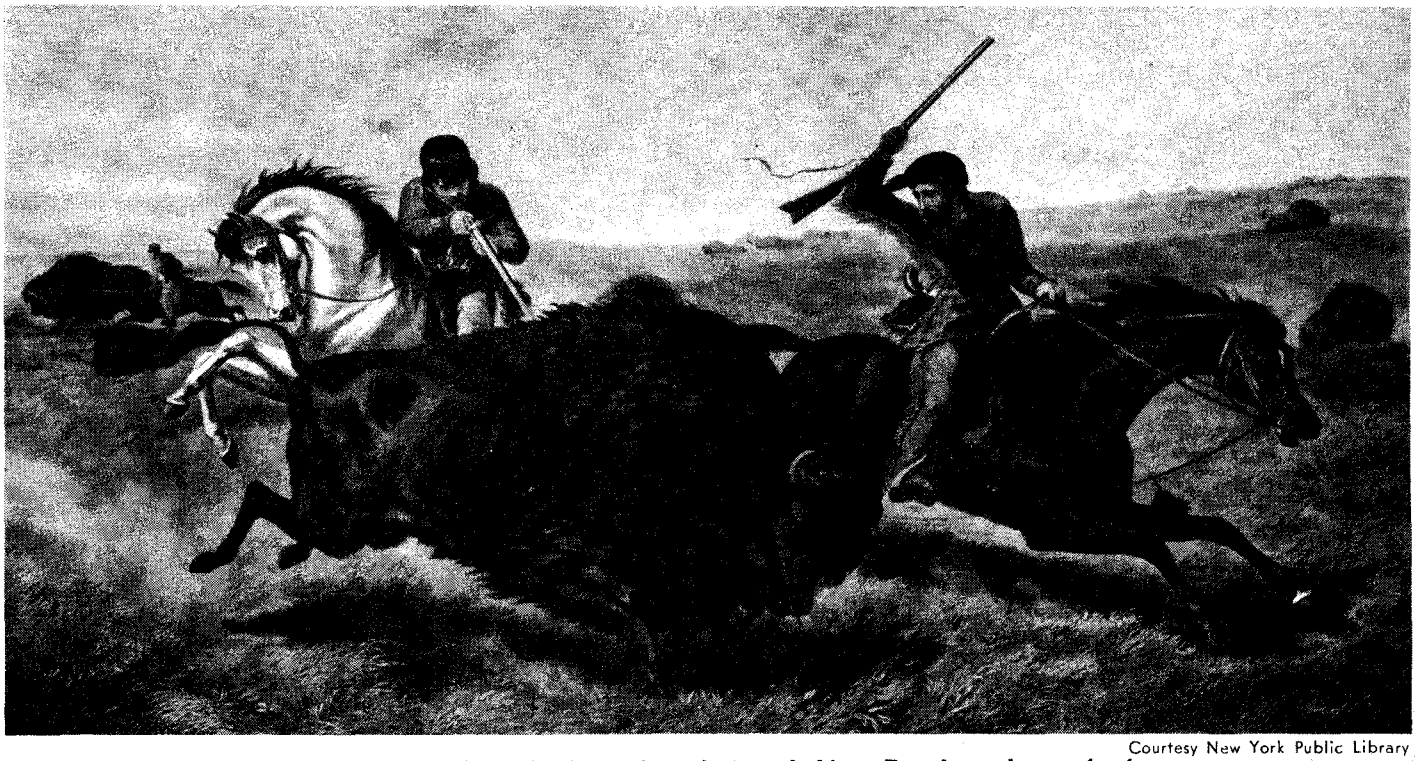


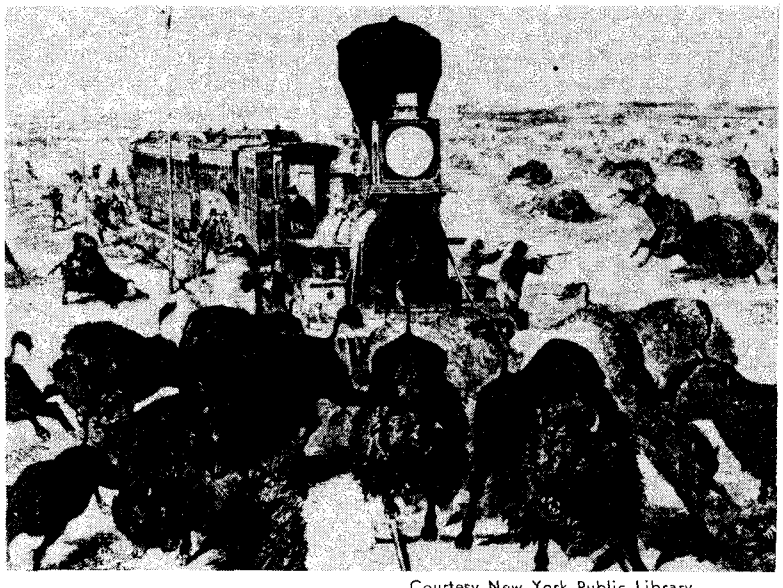
Courtesy New York Public Library

Mountain men hunting the buffalo. Hunter on the right is probably a French employee of a fur company.

The prehistoric bison was larger than its modern descendant and wore horns spreading five feet or more, as proved by its fossil remains. The name "buffalo" is probably derived from early French explorers, who called the bison *"le boeuf."* Through the years, as English-speaking trappers, traders, and settlers poured into the country, the name became changed to "buff" and "buffler," finally winding up as "buffalo." Actually, the American bison is not a buffalo at all, being of the family *Bovidae* which also includes cattle, sheep, goats, and antelope. The name "buffalo" applies scientifically only to the water buffalo, or carabao, and the African buffalo. However, the name of buffalo is too firmly affixed to the bison ever to be changed.

THE French *voyageurs* were not the first Europeans to gaze upon the mighty buffalo. Cortez saw it first, in Montezuma's menagerie at the Aztec capital of Anahauc in 1521. The Spanish leader described the buffalo as... "the Mexican Bull... with the hump of a camel and hair like a lion's..." It is no wonder that Cortez was impressed with "the Mexican Bull." A full-grown buffalo bull stands six feet high at the shoulder, with a length of nine and one-half feet, and weighs about 2500 pounds.

Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca was the first European to see the buffalo in its wild state. De Vaca kept a record of his journey from Florida to the Pacific in 1528-1536, and he first encountered the buffalo in what is now Texas. In 1540-1542, Coronado and his *(Continued on following page)*



Courtesy New York Public Library

Easy hunting. Hide men shooting buffalo from a train.

Brummett Echohawk

ing at the tail of his fancy buckskin jacket.

Forty thousand buffalo hides, piled in the yards of Rath and Wright, Dodge City, Kansas, 1877, ready for shipment.

Frontier Pix

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men saw great herds of buffaloes in their march through the territory now comprising Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. Coronado's chronicler, Pedro de Casteneda, thought the huge, shaggy "cows" the most monstrous beasts man had ever seen. A careful historian, de Casteneda was baffled in his efforts to estimate the numbers of buffaloes observed and finally gave up and listed them merely as numerous as fish in the sea.

The early white explorers regarded the buffalo as a fearsome curiosity, but to the Indians the vast herds meant life itself. The whole economy of the Plains tribes was based upon the buffalo; their very existence depended upon it. All parts of the animal were used. Shaggy skins made up the Indian's winter clothing and his bed; tanned skins his tepee, moccasins, leggings and shirts, and provided clothing for his family. Boats were made from fresh hides stretched taut over green willow or cottonwood hoops. Water buckets were fashioned from the lining of the paunch. Thread and bowstrings were made from the tough back sinews; spoons, bows and ornaments came from scraped and polished horn. The huge ribs made excellent runners for small dog-drawn sleds. Glue was made from the hoofs. Even the stones found in the gall-bladders were employed in the making of "medicine paint." Strangest of all, from the white man's point of view, the foetus, cooked in its own enveloping fluid, was esteemed a special delicacy. Buffalo droppings, or "chips," furnished fuel in regions where there was no firewood.

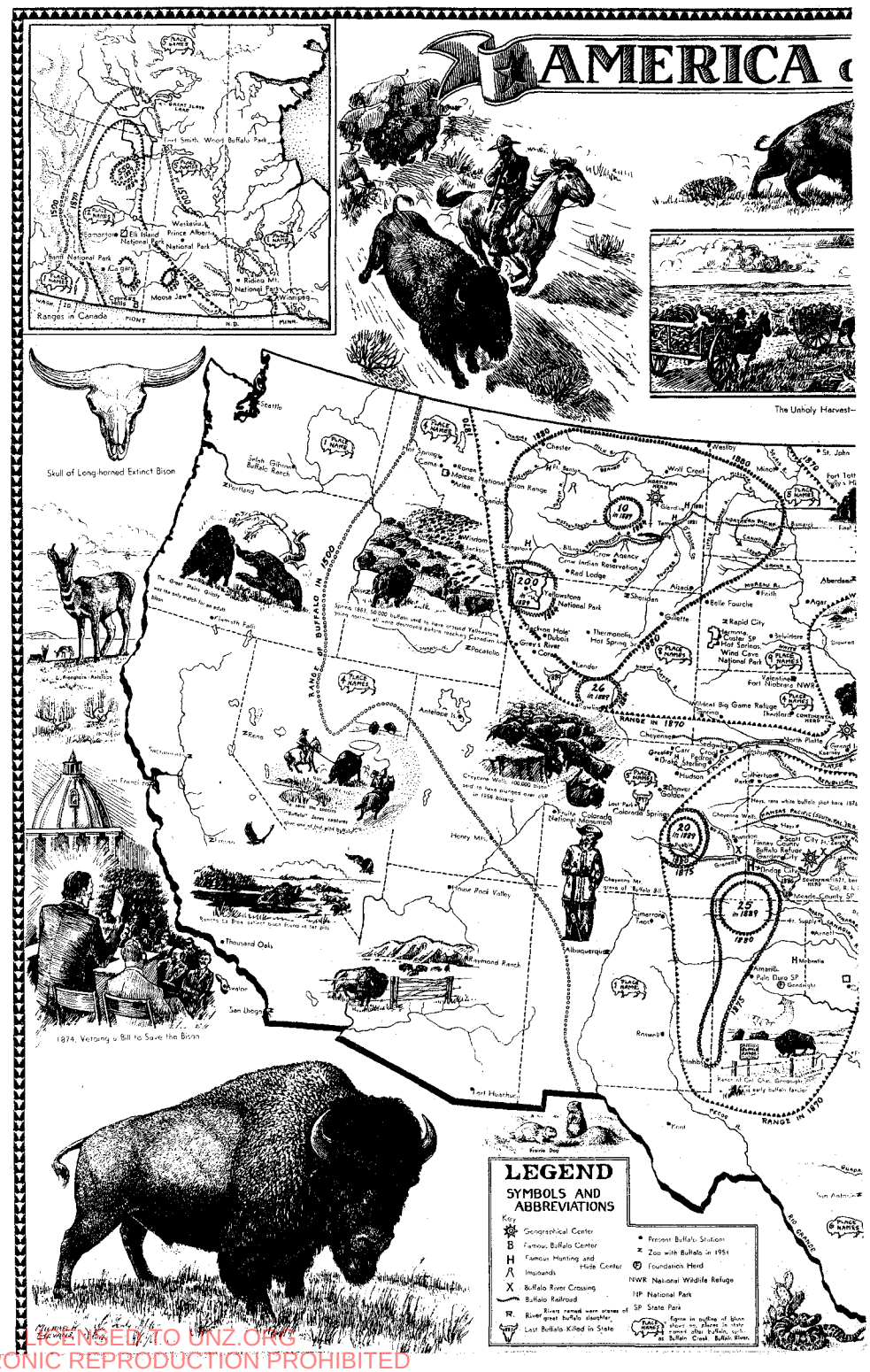
Pemmican, the first concentrated meat ration, was the invention of the Indian. Buffalo meat was cut into thin strips and dried in the sun. It was then pounded almost to a powder, mixed with boiling buffalo fat, and poured into lengths of intestine or rawhide *parfleche* boxes. An ideal diet—particularly when mixed with edible berries—it kept the Indian well nourished and free from scurvy. White explorers and later the mountain men learned to make pemmican for themselves. "Sticks to yore ribs without rilin' up yore guts," was Jim Bridger's inelegant but accurate description of the advantages of pemmican over white man's food.

Before the coming of the horse, the Indians hunted buffaloes on foot. Mass kills were made by driving the herd over a steep cliff. (One of these sites may be seen at Buffalo Jump-off in the Yellowstone Valley twenty-five miles north of Gardiner, Montana.) On the Plains, the trick was to decoy the buffaloes into crude corrals where they could be slaughtered with arrow and lance. Braves dressed in fresh buffalo hides lured the slow-witted beasts into the death trap.

THIS wasteful method was seldom employed by the Indians after the arrival of the horse on the prairie. Riding his perfectly trained buffalo horse, a hunter could follow a herd for miles, shooting fat cows with arrows or bringing them down with lance thrusts. One brave, mounted on a good horse, could kill up to one hundred buffalo in this manner in a day's hunt. Guided by the knee pressure of its rider or by a rawhide thong around the lower jaw, the crack buffalo horse brought the hunter swiftly into killing position alongside the lumbering quarry while simultaneously avoiding prairie dog holes and badger burrows, rocks, and the charges of maddened buffaloes. Usually the clever mount succeeded; if it failed, the result was almost invariably quick death for horse and rider beneath the churning hoofs of the stampeding herd.

After the hunt, men and horses relaxed while the squaws went out on the prairie with their knives to skin the carcasses and prepare the meat. Each hunter, possibly as a reward for his feat of bringing down game, or—more probably—to keep him quiet until supper was ready, was given a whole liver all for himself. Sprinkled with the secretions of the gall bladder, this made a tasty tidbit. Invariably before the entire liver was eaten, the gorger would fall asleep and the squaws would have all the time they needed to rustle up a big feast before the old man woke up hungry all over again.

The mountain men quickly adopted this method of "running" buffalo. Hunting the big buffs on horseback with muzzle-loading rifles or heavy horse pistols, was a daring and dexterous performance that appealed to the wild trappers' sporting instinct. That it was also difficult and extremely dangerous, bothered these veteran *hivernants* not at all. Francis Parkman in *The Oregon Trail* wrote: "The chief difficulty in running buffalo . . . is that of loading the gun or pistol at full gallop. Many hunters for convenience's sake carry three or four bullets in the mouth; the powder is poured down the muzzle of the piece, the bullet dropped in after it, the stock struck hard upon the pommel of the saddle, and the



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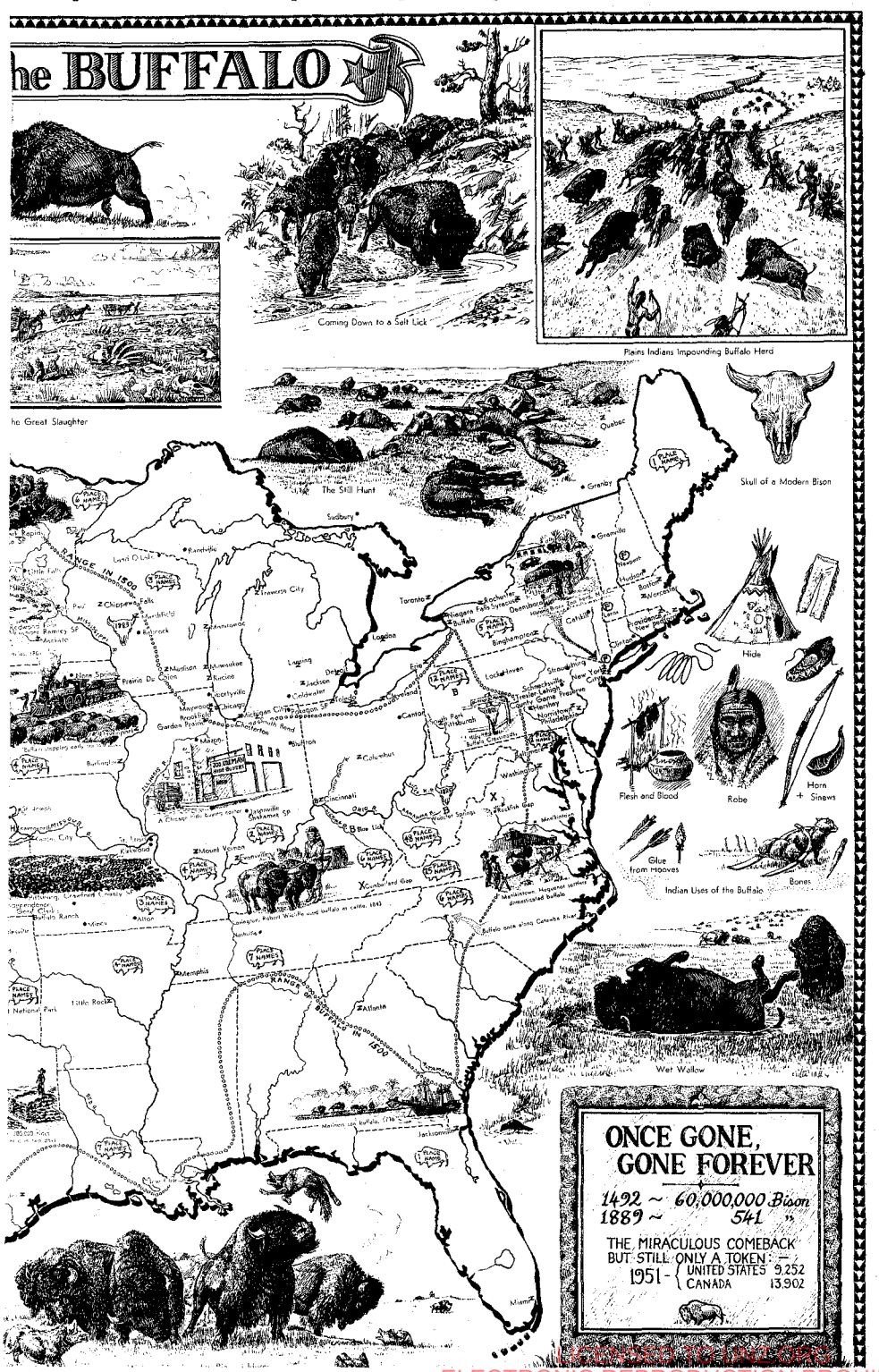
work is done. The danger of this is obvious. Should the blow on the pommel fail to send the bullet home, or should the bullet, in the act of aiming, start from its place and roll toward the muzzle, the gun would probably burst in discharging. Many a shattered hand and worse casualties besides have been the result of such an accident."

The mountain men hunted buffaloes primarily for meat, secondarily for sport. The thought of hunting them commercially for their hides never entered the trappers' minds until the lucrative beaver trade petered out in the late 1830's. Hide hunting developed gradually over the next decade until, in 1845, 90,000 robes were sent to market. Seton estimates that probably a million and a half buffaloes were slaughtered to produce 90,000 marketable robes.

The Indians were not blameless; they too got in on the bloody performance. True conservationists before the arrival of the white trader with his guns and whiskey and flashy trade goods, the tribesmen now began to kill buffaloes for profit. One pint of trade whiskey, composed of four parts water to one part cheap, raw alcohol, was the going price for one good skin worth from five to ten dollars. A package of twelve steel arrowheads was also rated an even exchange for a first-grade robe. These arrowheads, produced in bulk for the Indian trade by a number of Eastern firms, cost the trader six cents a dozen. Greedy squaws kept their men hunting incessantly to provide vermilion, beads, awls, blankets, red and blue cloth, flimsy knives and kettles offered by the traders in exchange for skins. Sugar, and a vile concoction blandly called coffee, was also eagerly sought by the Indians. The more intelligent among the chiefs clearly saw that their avaricious young men were blindly aiding the whites to destroy the tribes' livelihood, but their protests were howled down in council by the youthful braves anxious to go on collecting the traders' liquor and gewgaws. The "Great Slaughter of the Herds" had begun and nothing could stop it.

Map of the buffalo country in the days of the great herds. Caribou Press



BY 1863, the robe trade with the Indians and white hunters was enormous. Yet, even in 1863, buffaloes were still so numerous on the Plains as to "cover the entire country with a vast, moving brown blanket," according to Martin Garretson in his book *The American Bison*. Riding through the southern herd, Garretson notes that this tremendous gathering of buffaloes covered an area approximately twenty-five miles wide and fifty miles long.

After the Civil War, right up until the coming of the railroad, the Army posts strung along the frontier consumed countless buffaloes. Contracts were made by the Government with professional hunters to furnish the posts with meat. Having no way to ship hides in bulk, the hunters simply discarded them. The building of the Missouri Pacific and Kansas Pacific Railroads westward solved the transportation problem both ways—for hides and hunters. "Sportsmen" from all over the world rushed to participate in the ceaseless slaughter. The passengers of one train held up by a herd of buffaloes pouring across the track, amused themselves for hours by shooting into the herd from the windows of the stalled train. More than five hundred animals were killed or crippled in this sterling exhibition of marksmanship before the herd thinned out and the train moved on.

Young Bill Cody worked as a hunter for a railroad camp during this period. For $500 a month, Cody supplied the camp with the hind quarters of ten to twelve buffaloes a day—the rest of the carcasses were left on the prairie to rot along with the innumerable carcasses left by other hunters. During the hot weather the resulting stench was enough to "sicken a polecat," as the disgusted Bridger put it. There weren't enough coyotes, magpies, ravens and buzzards to clean up the mess.

Cody won his immortal title of "Buffalo Bill" in somewhat inglorious fashion. A wounded bull gored his horse and dumped the dashing young plainsman on the prairie. Bill took off afoot with the bull snorting at the tail of his fancy buckskin jacket. Laughing soldiers from a nearby military post rescued Cody and dubbed him "Buffalo Bill" then and there. But Cody was smart; he turned the incident into a duel to the death between himself—armed only with a knife—and a "Maddened Monarch of the Plains." His fame was secure for all time.

The Army, rank and file, took heated exception to Cody's claim of being the "champion buffalo killer in the world." They believed their own champion, a scout and hunter named Billy Comstock, employed at Fort Wallace, rated the title and also the handle of "Buffalo Bill." Accordingly, the officers at Fort

(Continued on following page)

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Photo by E. P. Haddon, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bison cows and calves, Wichita Mts. Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma.

Photo by E. P. Haddon, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Close-up of albino bull bison showing only facial and eye details. National Bison Range, Moiese, Montana.

Wallace raised a purse of $500 and issued a challenge to Cody to engage in a match hunt with Comstock for the buffalo shooting championship of the world. Cody accepted the challenge.

Posters heralding the event appeared at all the stations along the new railroad. An excursion train was run from St. Louis, bearing more than one hundred passengers, including Cody's wife. The wording and setup of the poster was as follows:

Grand Excursion
To
Fort Sheridan
Kansas Pacific Railroad
Buffalo Shooting Match
For
$500 a Side
And the
Championship of the World
Between
Billy Comstock (the famous scout)
And
W. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill)
Famous Buffalo Killer
for the
Kansas Pacific Railroad

The hunt took place on the prairie twenty miles east of Sheridan, at a point level enough so the spectators could view the proceedings. "At this point," writes Garretson, "the party left the train and rode to the hunting ground in wagons and on horseback. Cody rode Brigham (his favorite horse) and used his needle-gun Lucretia Borgia, a breech-loading Springfield rifle, caliber .50. Comstock used a Henry rifle.

"The wager was $500 a side, and the man who killed the greatest number of buffalo from horseback in one day of eight hours, beginning at 8 o'clock in the morning, was to be declared the winner.

"A referee was to follow each hunter to count his buffalo. Both hunters were to enter the herd at the same time.

"Three runs were made. In the first, Cody killed thirty-eight, and Comstock twenty-three. In the second, against a herd which was composed mostly of cows and calves, Cody killed eighteen, and Comstock fourteen. In the third and last run Cody gave an exhibition of his skill and horsemanship by leaving both saddle and bridle behind; he entered the herd and quickly killed thirteen, Comstock nine.

"This finished the contest with a total of sixty-nine for Cody and forty-six for Comstock. Cody was then declared by the referee to be the champion buffalo hunter of the plains, and to have proved his right to the title of 'Buffalo Bill.' "

THE SANTA FE reached Dodge City, Kansas, in September, 1872. Dodge, before the arrival of the railroad, was a sleepy little village of sod huts and board shacks dozing out its existence in the hot prairie sun. Almost overnight it was transformed into a hell-roaring frontier town, a busy shipping point for the longhorn cattle driven up the trail from Texas, and for steadily increasing shipments of buffalo hides. Dodge, in addition to being the cow capital of the nation, quickly became the "Buffalo Capital of the World." In 1873 Dodge had a population of 4,000, and two-thirds of it was made up of buffalo hunters. Hide sheds along the railroad right-of-way, some of them 175 feet high and 60 wide, held the skins waiting to be shipped. The first winter the Santa Fe reached Dodge City, the firm of Rath and Wright alone shipped more than 200,000 buffalo hides. Another firm shipped two carloads of hind quarters, and one outfit sent two carloads of smoked, salted buffalo tongues at fifty cents apiece to high-class markets in New York and London. In the main, however, it was hides that built up the bulging bankrolls of hunters and shippers.

A hide hunter who failed to kill from forty to sixty head in a day's shooting was considered not worth the ammunition he used. Some experienced hunters, like Tom Nixon and Bill Tilghman, ran up far higher scores. Nixon burned out the barrel of a new Sharps killing 120 buffaloes in forty minutes, and went on to rack up 2,173 kills in six months. Tilghman never equaled Nixon's score of 120 buffaloes in less than an hour, but beat Tom's six-months' record by killing 3,300 head in the same length of time. Brick Bond, however, was the champion. Brick averaged 97 kills a day in the fall and winter of 1875-76 for a record one-man bag of 5,855 buffs.

The Sharps Big Fifty was the favorite weapon of the hide men. These shoulder cannon were usually fired from a rest of crossed sticks or a Y-shaped shooting stick. Some of them, specially made for the hide trade, weighed from 16 to 18 pounds. The .45-70, .45-90, and .45-120 Sharps were next best for the bloody business. .56-56 Spencers and .50 caliber Springfields were also used. Cartridges cost twenty-five cents apiece, but the smart hunter cut his over-all ammunition cost by reloading his own shells.

Professional hide men shot from a "stand," in cover or on a rise in the prairie, at ranges of below 100 yards to—occasionally—nearly 500 yards. Each man usually alternated two rifles in order to prevent dangerous fouling of the barrels. Eventually both rifle barrels would become clogged with black powder residue, and the shooter would have to stop firing to clean them by pouring water down each hot barrel until the caked burned powder was washed away.

With all that powder being burned by thousands of hunters, the price of skins fell to $1.25 each by the fall of 1873. Hind quarters had dropped to a cent a pound with few buyers; fore quarters were worthless. Tongues, still considered a delicacy by Eastern and European epicures, were selling at twenty-five cents apiece.

IN wholesale slaughter of this kind, the buffalo had no more chance than a steer in a stockyard. Still hunting from a stand was the ruthlessly efficient method employed—that is, to shoot steadily at a herd from one firing position. The technique of the skillful hunter was to drop one "lead" buffalo after another with clean neck or heart shots—a wounded animal was sure to stampede the herd into wild flight. Hence the value of the Big Fifty, which usually killed with one bullet if the bullet was properly placed. On horseback it took 15 to 25 hunters to kill 1,000 buffaloes a season; whereas a good still hunter could kill 3,000 single-handed in the same length of time. Still hunters ran up a stupendous total of 12,500,000

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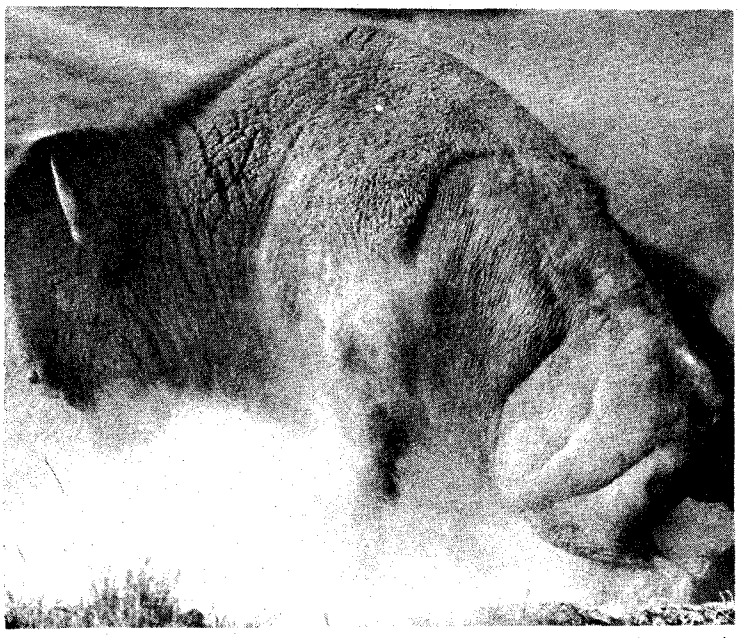

Photo by E. P. Haddon, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
Large bull bison rising to his feet after wallowing in the dust. Buffalo wallows may still be seen in parts of the West.

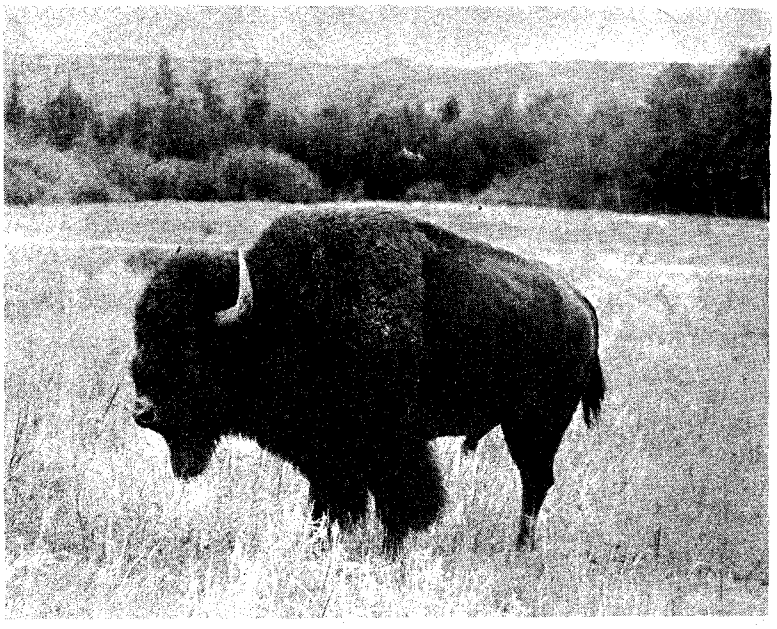

Photo by H. W. Henshaw, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
Good specimen of buffalo bull. Photo clearly shows anatomical details. Wichita Mts. Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma.

kills between 1870 and 1875, as estimated by Professor J. A. Allen, in his book *The American Bisons, Living and Extinct,* and other authorities.

A well set up hide hunting outfit consisted of one or two riflemen, five or six skinners, two or three stretchers, and two wagons—one drawn by four mules for speed in getting back and forth with skins and supplies. The other wagon, drawn by four yoke of oxen, did the heavy hauling. The division of profit varied according to how hard a bargain the hunters could drive with their crews. Some hunters, after paying all expenses, split the profit fifty-fifty with their outfit; others—if they could get away with it—paid their helpers twenty-five cents for stripping the hide off a buffalo and pegging it out to dry. At such wages buffalo skinning was not recommended as a method of getting rich quick. Few skinners kept accounts, but one gent named Jack Cook recorded in a journal that he skinned 902 buffaloes in forty-one days, an average of twenty-two animals daily. Cook was paid the munificent sum of $225.50—which averaged out to $38.50 a week.

The insatiable hide hunters followed the dwindling herds south, and in 1877 the new "Buffalo Capital" was Fort Griffin, near Abilene, Texas. Fifteen hundred hunters concentrated in the area soon covered a four acre tract near the town with drying skins. In two months, more than 100,000 hides were taken. The price tumbled to a dollar a skin, and the end of the hide business was in sight. By the close of 1878 the vast southern herd was virtually exterminated. A few survivors fled to the remote depths of the *Llano Estacado,* the Staked Plain.

Now outraged public opinion rose to defend the buffalo. Laws were passed in some states to protect the bison, but unfortunately there were few left to protect. General Phil Sheridan, military commander of the Southwest, angrily opposed a protection bill that came before the Texas Legislature. "Protect the buffalo, *hell!*" cried Sheridan. "The hide hunters have done more to solve the Indian problem than the Army has been able to do in thirty years. Let them kill, skin and sell until the buffalo is exterminated, as it is the only way to bring about a lasting peace and allow civilization to advance."

President Grant, seeing eye to eye with his old comrade in arms, refused to sign the protection bill. So the fate of the buffalo was sealed.

NOW that the southern herd was exterminated, the hide hunters moved in on the northern herd. The hunters were jubilant, for Montana skins were worth four times as much as a Texas skin. Climatic conditions made the northern hide thicker, which made up into a warmer, more luxuriant robe. In 1876, before the arrival of the railroad, Fort Benton, Montana, at the head of navigation on the Missouri, sent 80,000 skins to market. Until 1880, the annual take averaged about that figure. In 1880, the Northern Pacific pushed steel from Bismarck into the heart of the buffalo country—and the last phase of the great slaughter began. Thousands of hunters arrived via the railroad to cash in on the last great buffalo jackpot. From sunrise to sunset, seven days a week, the crisp Montana air vibrated to the booming roar of the heavy Sharps and the lighter reports of Springfields and Spencers.

In 1881, 50,000 hides were shipped by rail; in 1882, 200,000; in 1883, 40,000; and in 1884, 300. Prices soared from $5 a hide to $30, with few available. In 1885, a hide brought $75—whenever a hide could be obtained.

Garretson tells of the finish of the last herd in these stark and simple words: "In the fall of 1883 there was practically but one herd left, it being found between the Moreau and Cannon Ball Rivers in North Dakota. There were about 10,000 animals in this herd. In September, Sitting Bull and his followers went up the Cannon Ball hunting. The first day they killed 1,100—an average of one buffalo to each Indian. The white hunters that accompanied the Indians averaged from 20 to 60 a day each. By the middle of November the herd was wiped out. *(Continued on page 38)*

Herd of bison crossing the Mission River, National Bison Range, near Moiese, Montana. Photo by E. P. Haddon, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Wood Buffalo at Bay. This magnificent diorama is in Canada's National Museum at Ottawa.

BUFFALO COMEBACK

By FRANCIS DICKIE

Photos courtesy Department of Resources and Development, Ottawa, Canada

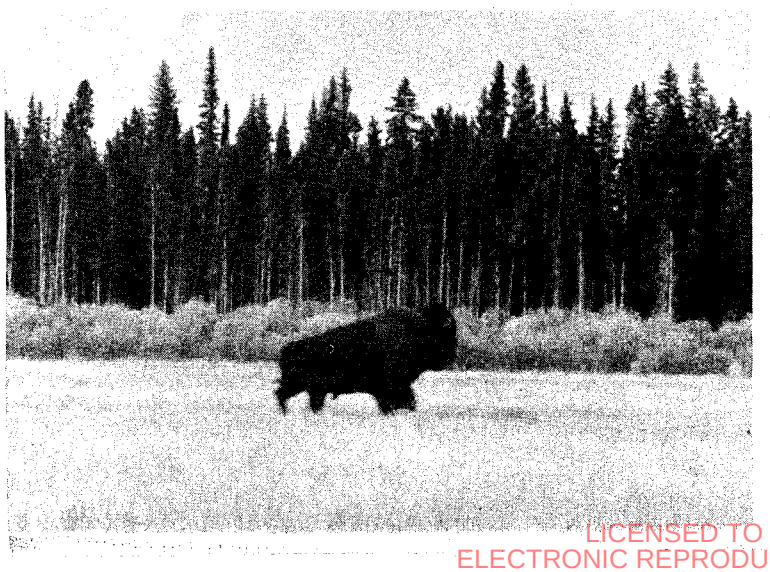
The fascinating story of how the Canadian Government preserved a portion of Canada's once mighty buffalo population.

IN 1889, there was not a single wild plains buffalo left in the United States. Only 256 buffaloes remained alive in the entire country; these in captivity. Of the original estimated 60 millions which once roamed North America from northern Canada to Florida, only one small wild herd survived—a subspecies of wood buffalo in the Slave River region of northwestern Canada. In 1890 this herd was vaguely estimated to number between 200 and 300 animals.

In Canada at this time, an energetic newspaper editor named Norman Luxton hit upon an idea to save the buffalo from extinction. Enthusiastically, Luxton tackled Frank Oliver, the Minister of the Interior. Oliver caught fire from Norman Luxton, and the greatest animal conservation comeback in history began.

At this point, before giving the history of the Canadian Government's brilliant success in this unique animal conservation undertaking, it is important to the reader to give a brief review of the history of the American bison—or, popularly if inaccurately, buffalo.

Wood Buffalo at Wood Buffalo Park, a vast wilderness tract of 17,300 square miles.



According to many authorities, 60 million buffaloes roamed the North American continent when Columbus discovered it in 1492. From Alaska to tropical Florida they roamed an area of three million square miles. To Indians and early settlers the buffalo meant food, clothing, shelter. The meat was well flavored, highly nutritious. The robes formed tepees and clothing; the horns, hooves, hair and bones furnished the Indians with utensils and ornaments.

The species is believed to have arrived on this continent in mid-Pleistocene times or during the warm inter-Glacial period. It probably crossed from Asia by the then northern land route and gradually spread southward until it ranged over nearly all of North America.

The estimated number previous to the year 1800 is still set at 60 million. By the year 1800 the total had already dropped tremendously. In 1820 the animal was still found in enormous numbers from Florida to the southern shore of Great Slave Lake.

In 1820, due to the rapidly increasing settlement, the systematic extermination of the animal began. It was the most wantonly ruthless slaughter of a stupid, easily-killed animal ever to take place on earth. Millions were destroyed—and only the tongues used for food. The insatiable hunters kept thousands of the beasts from watering places till the thirst-maddened animals came close enough to be killed with an axe.

Herds fifty miles long and half a mile wide are described by early travelers. Men riding in the first trains across the plains sat at the windows and shot the animals in great numbers beside the right-of-way.

So tremendously vast were the herds that white men and Indians could not conceive the creatures could ever be exterminated. Yet here are the shocking figures of the downfall of the buffalo.

BEFORE 1800 an estimated 60 million. In 1820, 40 million. In 1880, a few scattered thousands. In 1889, there were left only 256 buffalo in all the United States—and these all privately owned in captivity!

Only one wild herd of wood buffalo existed in the wilderness of northern Canada. This herd, in 1890, was vaguely estimated to consist of between 200 and 300 head.

Some amateur theorists in buffalo lore ascribe the herds' swift decline to sudden mass deaths in incredible numbers due to epidemic or burial and suffocation by great snowfall. Mass

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starvation in unusually severe weather has also been advanced by some writers as the reason for the buffaloes' demise. Remembering that the buffalo was the toughest animal in North America, and had survived and enormously increased for half a million years before the destructive white man came, neither theory is worth a hoot.

The beginning of the buffalo comeback was sheer, blind luck. It began in 1873, when Walking Coyote, a Pend d' Oreille Indian captured two bulls and two heifer calves in the hills of Southern Alberta. He drove them from the Sweetgrass country to Montana, where they were given to the Mission of St. Ignatius.

In 1884 the little herd numbered thirteen. Michael Pablo bought ten of them for $2,500. The herd roamed the Flathead Reserve.

In 1906 the U. S. Government decided to throw open the Reserve for homesteading. When Pablo put up the herd for sale, the Canadian Government bought the entire 716 animals for sale at $245 a head F.O.B. Edmonton.

Pablo, usually a shrewd bargainer, made a big mistake in selling the buffalo F.O.B. Edmonton. These animals, though descended from the four domesticated buffalo of Walking Coyote, had long ranged in wild country. The bulls were just as tough and ornery as the great bulls of the old days.

Pablo hired the best cowboys in the country, counting on a quick round-up and delivery. He was badly fooled. The buffalo fought and stampeded by turns. One cowboy was killed by a charging bull, ten riders suffered injuries, a dozen horses gored. What Pablo had considered a fast and easy delivery, continued over three years until the last animal was F. O. B. Edmonton.

Pending the completion of the huge area at Wainwright, Alberta, where the experiment was to begin, the buffalo were placed in a fenced range in Elk Island Park, near Lamont, Alberta.

The Buffalo National Park, Wainwright, Alberta, was completed in February, 1914, comprising an area of 170 square miles. Enclosed by a nine-foot wire fence, it was protected by 20-foot plowed fireguards on either side of the fence.

TO this Park by March 31, 1914, was brought a total of 833 head. Of this number, 716 were from the original Pablo herd, another 87 from a herd at Banff, and 30 head from the Conrad herd brought from Kalispell, Montana. The 87 animals from Banff were Canada's own original herd, started by G. B. Alloway in 1873. In that year Alloway, a trader from Winnipeg, captured three buffalo calves near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Two years later, in the spring of 1875, Alloway added two more. In 1878 the herd had increased to sixteen, and was then bought by S. L. Bedson. Bedson, seven years later, gave Lord Strathcona 27 animals. In 1898, thirteen of these were placed in Banff Park, and by 1914 numbered 87, which were sent to join the others gathered in Wainwright National Buffalo Park.

Thus, from nine buffalo calves, saved from destruction in 1873-1875, at widely separated points in the Canadian Northwest, was produced by 1914 the 833 animals launching the great buffalo comeback.

In addition to the 833 plains buffalo at Wainwright Park, the Canadian Government owned and protected a herd of wild wood buffalo in the Slave River region. This herd, from reports of Indians and white men, grew to 2000 by 1920. The wood buffalo, a more powerfully built, heavier coated creature than his plains cousin, was given a park of his own in September, 1926. This area embraces some 17,300 square miles.

With March, 1914, marking the installing of all the herd of 833 in Wainwright Park, the great comeback really began. The animals' response to their new environment was most gratifying, so much so that it soon had its embarrassing side. At the beginning of the experiment every new calf born was greeted with rejoicing, pointing up the success of the experiment.

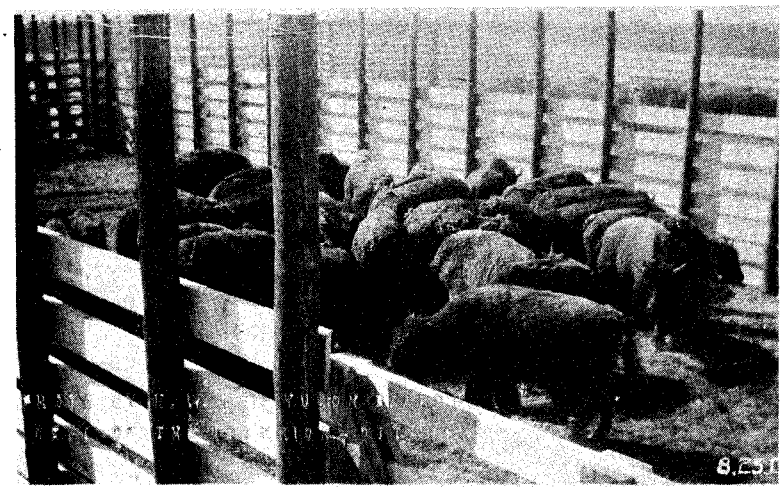
Unfortunately, the plains buffalo was, in its natural free state, essentially a creature given to fairly wide travel in moving from summer to winter range. Its natural increase was considerably kept down by climatic conditions, but more so by the inroads of wolves and Indians. Now the contented herd, protected by fenced range, brought serious problems in wildlife management. Of these, two were of major importance. The increase was too large, and soon even the 170 square mile area showed signs of overgrazing.

In 1914 the science of wildlife management was only in its infancy. The men in charge of the herd had no precedent to guide them. It was a learn-as-you-go situation.

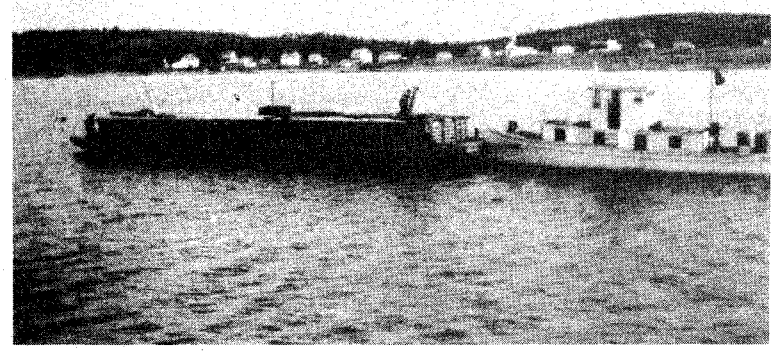
So rapid was the natural increase that, as early as 1921, it became necessary to take action in controlling the herd. Act-

(Continued on page 44)

Buffalo from Wainwright Park being driven into corrals for loading on trains to cover first 400 miles of the route.



Buffalo in corrals at starting point, Wainwright Park, ready for trans-shipment to far northern range.



Buffalo-loaded barge, en route to northern preserve via Clearwater and Slave Rivers.

Cut through the forest at La Butte on the way to National Wood Buffalo Park, Northwest Territories, Canada.

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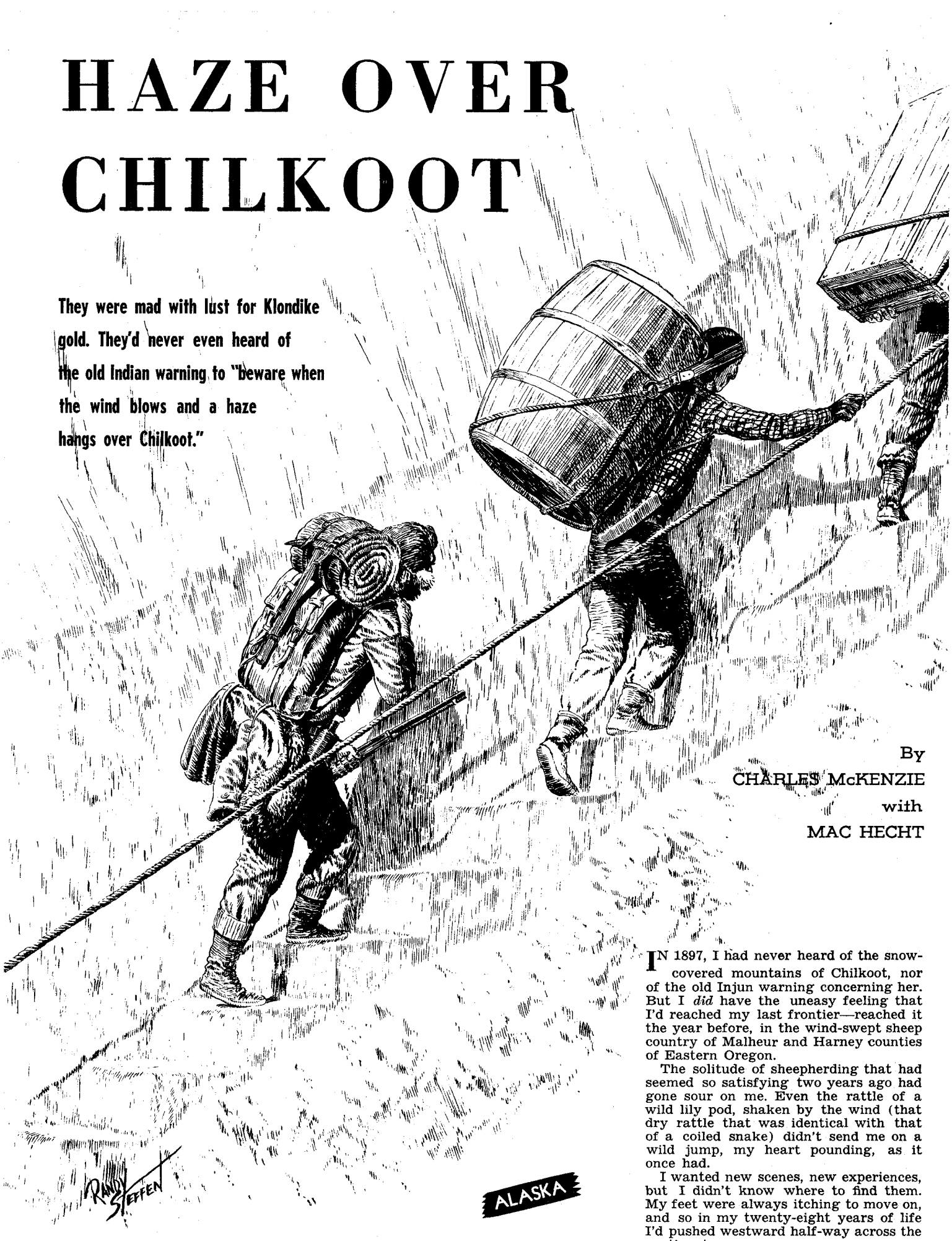
HAZE OVER CHILKOOT

They were mad with lust for Klondike gold. They'd never even heard of the old Indian warning to "beware when the wind blows and a haze hangs over Chilkoot."



By
CHARLES McKENZIE
with
MAC HECHT

ALASKA

IN 1897, I had never heard of the snow-covered mountains of Chilkoot, nor of the old Injun warning concerning her. But I *did* have the uneasy feeling that I'd reached my last frontier—reached it the year before, in the wind-swept sheep country of Malheur and Harney counties of Eastern Oregon.

The solitude of sheepherding that had seemed so satisfying two years ago had gone sour on me. Even the rattle of a wild lily pod, shaken by the wind (that dry rattle that was identical with that of a coiled snake) didn't send me on a wild jump, my heart pounding, as it once had.

I wanted new scenes, new experiences, but I didn't know where to find them. My feet were always itching to move on, and so in my twenty-eight years of life I'd pushed westward half-way across the continent.

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ILLUSTRATED BY RANDY STEFFEN

It was a tortuous climb for the strongest men — that steep ice stairway to Chilkoot Pass, on the dizzy summit of Chilkoot Mountain.

Born in Buchanan County, in 1870, I'd moved with my parents to Gallatin County, Montana, in 1880. We'd farmed and raised cattle there until 1888. Then we took another hitch westward. We landed in Lane County of Western Oregon, near Eugene. I worked with my father on the farm there, until 1896.

Restless, I looked westward once more. But now, only eighty miles away, across the fir-clad coast range, lay the rugged Pacific. But I *had* to keep moving. So I back-tracked to Eastern Oregon and settled down to sheepherding. I didn't stay settled long.

Just about the time I heard the blat of the first spring lamb, a fellow found gold on the Klondike river, in the Yukon Territory. While I listened to the endless bleats and "baa-a-aas" of ranging sheep, others across the nation were hearing another sound. The sound of the big stampede.

The big stampede of 1897!

Men and women, fired by dreams of untold wealth, rushed by crowded boatloads towards the Klondike and the treasure hidden there. Hardly had the thunder of their passing died, before tales concerning them came flooding back. Tales of fabulous strikes; of nests of nuggets big as hen's eggs; of paupers becoming rich overnight.

Other tales drifted back, too. Tales of disaster and privation. Tales of the penalties the untamed North exacted from those who would rob her of her treasure. These stories were discounted or cast aside. Only the golden tales counted. Those—and getting North as fast as one could.

I was like the rest of them. The gold fever flamed in me and I knew I'd have to go.

So I came back to Eugene in the fall of '97 and made preparations for departure. By late February of '98 I was ready. I had a little under $1,000 in my pocket, and was crazy to be off.

I went to Portland, but had to wait there until I could get a boat to Juneau. At last I booked passage on *The George W. Elder,* paying $35 for my ticket.

THEN *The George W. Elder* was on her way; and I was headed towards the land of gold. But Nature stepped in right away. We only got as far as Astoria, Oregon, a distance of 105 miles, then found out that it was too stormy to cross the bar. We laid overnight in Astoria.

It was rough next morning, too; but we sailed anyway. Right away *The George W. Elder* got a new name. We called her *"The George W. Roller."*

We had a rough voyage, but it didn't scare us much. The boat was loaded to capacity and we were potential millionaires—every one. None of us were too uneasy about a group of soldiers on the boat. These soldiers were being sent to Dawson, as a relief expedition, by the government. Rumors of famine had drifted back to the States; and the soldiers were being sent to relieve it.

We made Juneau in about a week's time. I stopped over, for a week or so, and laid in my supplies. I bought flour, bacon, beans, evaporated potatoes, rice, coffee, sugar, dried fruit, lots of tobacco, salt, soda, and a few simple medicines. Then I bought a tent, a Yukon stove, blankets, and an endless variety of needed tools and clothes. Last of all, I bought my Yukon sled. It was 7 feet long and 16 inches wide. The gee pole was 7 feet long. It was fastened to the side of the sled and functioned as both brake and steering apparatus. When I had finished my buying, I had an outfit of around 1,600 pounds.

The next step was to decide where I was to land in Alaska. There were two places possible—two trails to take that would eventually lead to the chain of rivers and lakes that was the route to Dawson. Dawson was where the Klondike and Yukon rivers met.

These two settlements each lay on a fork at the head of the Lynn Canal. The mountain bordering Lynn Canal extended north of Juneau. Dyea lay on the left fork, Skagway on the right. A few came into the Klondike by way of Edmonton, capital of Alberta; but I never did find out the exact route they took.

Dyea was an Injun village before the gold rush. The Dyea Trail started here and ran up the towering mountain of Chilkoot, through the pass, on her summit, and on to Lake Linderman.

Skagway settlement was an Injun village before the gold rush, too. The Skagway trail was a high trail and could be traveled by horse. It by-passed Lake Linderman and ended up at Lake Bennet. But the Skagway trail was longer. So I decided to take the Chilkoot trail, even if it did lead up to the clouds.

MY mind made up as to my destination, I caught a small Alaskan steamer for Dyea. This little boat was overloaded with men and supplies, but we got along all right until we reached the Lynn Canal. As nearly as I can judge, the canal is about 80 miles inland.

We'd just entered her when a wild storm roared down on us. *The George W. Roller* was a rocking-chair compared to our little boat, then. The rain lashed and froze on everything it touched. We wallowed an entire day in the canal. When we finally sighted the lights of Dyea, that night, our boat was covered with ice with the exception of her smokestack.

Dyea sat on a long, sloping beach, just above tide-water. The beach was fully a mile long. Our boat took us in as far as she could. Then we scrambled ashore and staggered groggily up that long beach towards those twinkling lights. Our goods would be floated in during the night. Lighters, or small boats, from Dyea, met each steamer and floated the goods in on high tide. This service was sold to us by the steamship company, along with our tickets.

My legs felt like rubber and my stomach kept doing somersaults as I plodded through the night. I found a bed in a hotel and rolled into it.

The next thing I knew the sun was shining in my face. It took me a while to realize where I was. Strange sounds beat against my eardrums. Even as I lay there, I sensed the urgency of those sounds.

Then I remembered my outfit, waiting to be claimed and I lost no time in getting dressed.

AS I hurried towards the beach, the strangeness of this new land jarred the cobwebs from my brain. My home, in the rain-swept Williamette Valley, 1,300 miles away, seemed to belong to another world.

It was the last of March now, and there was a sting to the snow-chilled air. The sun was blazing down, though, and the temperature hung just above the freezing mark.

Dyea was only a huddle of raw shacks, saloons, gambling houses, a hotel, boardinghouses and tents. Snow-clad mountains reared in every direction. A river flowed through the town. This was the Dyea River. Willows, cottonwoods, elders, and some spruce grew along the river. In the distance loomed the white-topped coast range. That mountain range I would have to cross to get into Canadian Territory, on my way to the Klondike.

Thousands milled around Dyea. They crowded the saloons and restaurants. They overflowed the street and beach. Injuns were everywhere. They lugged

(Continued on page 28)

Charlie McKenzie, in recent years.

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SPIRIT CURSE OF THE LC

By LYNDON RIPLEY

GOLD is sometimes cursed stuff. There are many old-timers who swear that the richest veins, sands and quartz deposits have the curses of dead men placed upon them. They contend that a hopeful prospector can search in vain all his life, after finding a sample of the precious raw metal. Until the day that he leaves this mortal vale, he remains obsessed with the dream of riches that he once found—and lost. This is especially true in the case of Louis E. Belfils, the French watchmaker, about whom many tales have been and are still being told on the Pacific Coast.

His son, Dr. J. A. Belfils, until his recent death a dentist in Eureka, California, vouched for the fact that his dad found an Oregon bonanza in quartz, then spent the remainder of his life trying to locate it again. The Doctor also tried—in fact, dozens of prospectors have searched the hills—and has never found the lost Frenchman's lode.

Yet it is there. It still lies in rough Southern Oregon country somewhere between latitude 42° 10′ and 42° 20′, and longitude 123° 40′ and 123° 50′. It is there because at nearby Pocket Knoll over two million dollars worth of gold has been taken out of rocky mountain pockets. At Tennessee Gulch, not so far away either, over a million dollars in placered gold has been removed.

Other similar spots in the vicinity—Lightning Gulch, Baby Foot Creek, Mud Springs, Free And Easy Pass, to name a few—have produced $10,000 to $50,000 worth of gold. It has been removed by placering, panning and quartz reduction. All through this part of the country there are precious metals in the upheaved rock formations—gold, silver, copper, manganese and hush-hush metals mined for atomic bomb creation. The Belfils "lucky spot," with its fortune in wire gold quartz, awaits some modern day adventurer who is more fortunate than those who have gone before him.

Yes, the gold is there, shimmering through various kinds of mountain weather, somewhere on the eastern slope of the Siskiyou Mountains. All you have to do is go and find it, for you've been given the correct and almost exact spot where it is located.

The only catch is that it isn't easy to find. You have to pack in, fight heat and sometimes lack of water, struggle up and down wooded, ragged country. It is still as rough and raw as it was back in 1855 when Lou Belfils found the piece of amazingly rich quartz—then ducked an Indian arrow and fled for his life.

IT was a sunny May morning when young Lou—then about 24 years old—set out from Sailor's Diggings, a pioneer settlement that is today called Waldo, Oregon. He was astride Katinka, his plodding little burro, and trailed Spooney, her pack companion, on a rope. Lou had finished repairing watches belonging to local miners and had plenty of money left over after buying supplies for the trip over the ridge to Fort Dick. Soon he would be getting back to Jackson City—now Jacksonville—near Medford. There was more watch fixing and profitable trading to do just across the mountains.

The trip, up to the 3900 foot crest, where Josephine County bordered on Curry, proved uneventful. He went down the west slope of the Siskiyous toward the Pacific, following the trail that meandered close to what is now the California-Oregon state line. Taking a more southerly direction he finally reached the coastal settlement of Fort Dick, near the Pacific Coast.

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ST FRENCHMAN'S GOLD!

ILLUSTRATED BY AL MARTIN NAPOLETANO

In about two weeks Lou wound up available repair business at the Fort. After buying more limited supplies, he started out again. This time he took a more northerly government trail, for he intended to by-pass Sailor's Diggings, hit for what is now called Kerby, in the flat near Tennessee Pass, then cut north to Applegate country and home.

Late that afternoon he made camp in the setting sun beside young growth of fir and spruce. The burros seemed glad to stop, have saddles removed, to quench their thirst and graze, in spite of being hobbled.

In less than an hour he topped a rise and reached a small clearing that was bathed in morning sunshine. Off to the northeast he could see wooded ridges in several shades of purple. Nearer at hand he made out the hunched bulks of Tennessee and Josephine Mountains.

Here on the high ridge there was a deep, cathedral stillness. Lou glanced back and jerked Spooney's lead rope. He started whistling, to sort of knock the edge off his unwelcome, lonely mood. He was looking up idly at a circling buzzard when Katinka stopped short. Lou almost sprawled over the long ears that had flicked up and stiffened, alertly listening.

He noted then that the burro was staring intently at a clump of bushes near some pines. The whistle stuck on a high note and died on puckered lips. Lou listened too, tense and apprehensive. Little Katinka was like a watchdog when it came to scenting danger.

LOU half turned and glanced back at his pack animal. In that brief moment of time something whished past his ear and thudded into a tree beside him. His startled eyes beheld a feather-tipped arrow, still quivering, its triangular tip half buried in the bark.

For a moment he was numb with surprise.

"Indian! Indian!" Lou cried then, in the redskin jargon that he thought would be understood. "White man Indian friend!"

When there was no movement and no response, Lou made up his mind in a hurry. He pounded his heels against his burro's ribs, urging her to fly if she could.

Finally, after what seemed miles of headlong flight, Lou reined up his lathered, panting burro. Glancing back, he discovered that Spooney had slipped his halter and had gone off on a tangent of his own.

Lou tried to calm his fear, now seeing nothing of the Indians. He wanted to go back and get the pack burro, for almost all his duffle was on the pack saddle. The redskins, however, were too confoundedly close.

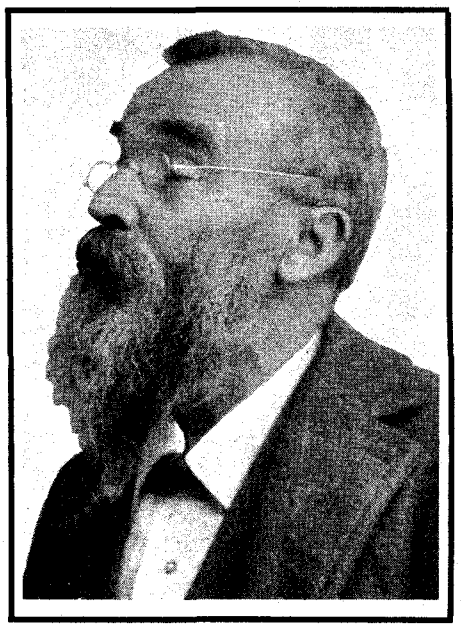
At that point he tried to figure out where he was. In his wild dash along the ridge and down through mountain brush and heavy timber he had left the trail behind. Now, in order to find it again, he'd have to go back. And to go back...

Lou slapped Katinka on a flank and set out north again, with the sun rising to his right. Coming to the top of a small rise, he looked back and decided immediately that he had been wise in hurrying on. He glimpsed three buckskin-clad savages who were boldly following along behind.

Now definitely sure that he would be trailed, Lou kept going north and east, around canyons when possible, up along cliff edges, down through streams he had never seen before. He was a little surprised to see the north land more cut up than he had figured it. For game it was a wilderness paradise.

(Continued on page 32)

In his hand was a piece of whitish quartz, thickly threaded with glistening gold!



Louis E. Belfils, in later years.

Yes, gold is sometimes cursed stuff . . . as the Frenchman discovered to his sorrow.

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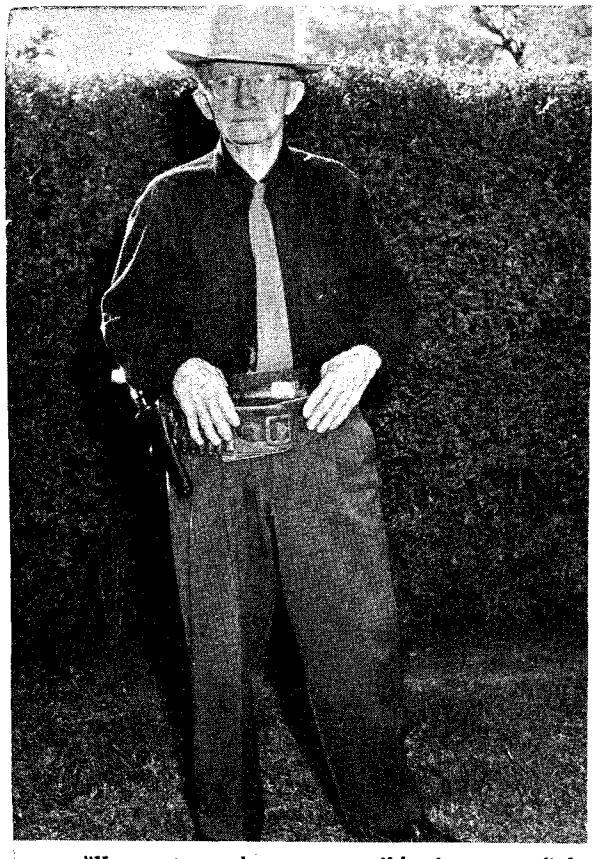
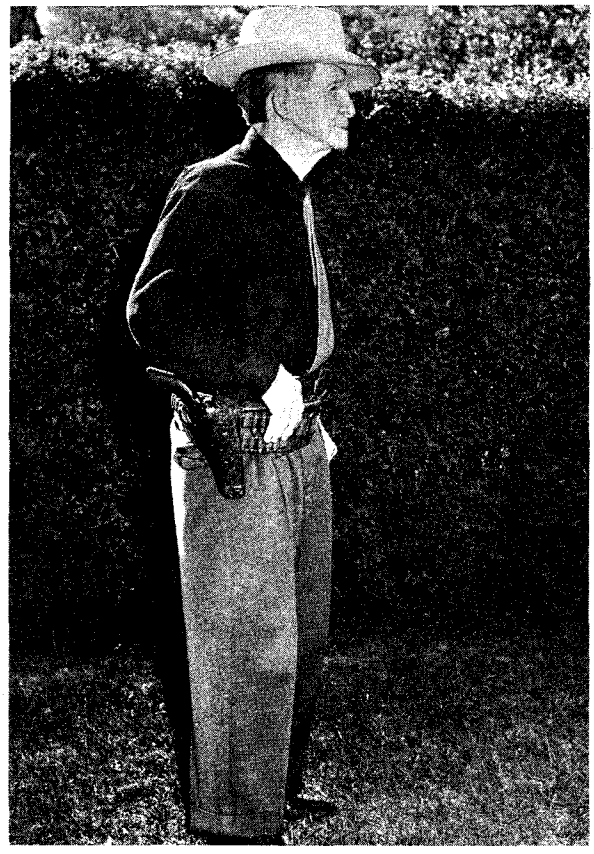
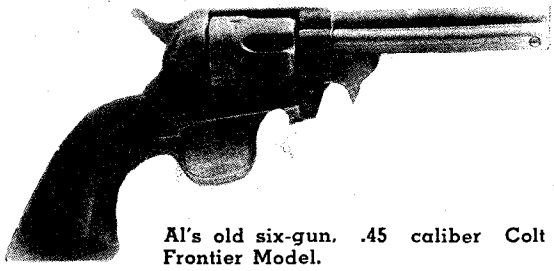


"You got as close as possible in a gun-fight. You hooked your hands lightly in your belt and watched the other man's eyes, waiting for him to make his move."



Al Jennings — side view, showing the low-cut holster.

Al starts to draw.



Al's old six-gun, .45 caliber Colt Frontier Model.

The last of the old-time Western outlaws tells you

THE WAY

By JOHN JOBSON

EDITOR'S NOTE: Al Jennings' career as an outlaw was of short duration and remains a highly controversial topic. Yet—as Al is the last of the old-time Western outlaws—TRUE WEST believes that his story deserves to be told.

IN a modest frame house on a shady street in Tarzana, California, there lives a spry gentleman of ninety-one, who recently celebrated his golden wedding anniversary.

To a casual observer this friendly little chap and his attractive wife, a devoted couple, are not at all unusual. They watch wrestling on television, have a mutual interest in their well-kept cats, and, in short, lead the sort of quiet, uneventful life one would expect of them. But look closely and you will observe the difference. An unusual number of fan letters from total strangers arrive daily at the home. Faded portraits of former Presidents of the United States, personally autographed, adorn the parlor walls. Bulging scrap-books, heavy with yellowed newspaper headline articles, are stacked on a table. . .

Few men born in the year 1864 have had less chance of enjoying either the mellow age of ninety-one *or* fifty years of happy marriage than the old gentleman mentioned above. He is Al Jennings, old-time Western outlaw, bank robber, train robber, leader of the notorious Al Jennings gang, and—inasmuch as he has participated in about twenty affairs of that nature—gunfighter. Yet Al Jennings has been much more than badman and gun-slick. Pardoned from a prison life sentence, he became a model citizen, attorney-at-law, respected holder of public office, author, motion picture producer, and friend of many famous people, among them O. Henry and Teddy Roosevelt.

While there are many facets to this man's background which would make interesting reading if written up, we especially appreciated the opportunity to interview Al Jennings in the hope that he could clear up a puzzling dilemma from which we have long suffered. We have, in common with other serious students of the Old West, frequently wondered just what was the deadly technique employed by the virtuosos of the six-shooter in swiftly and neatly dispatching their opponents.

Certainly we do not always get the true picture from movie epics or the Western novel. Take equipment alone. We learned that Al Jennings never owned the movie style "buscadero" holster-belt in his life. Neither did he sport a white hat the size of a beach umbrella. At an early age, when knocking around Dodge City and Abilene, he saw Wild Bill Hickok and Bat Masterson, and declares flatly that they did not flaunt such picturesque attire either. Nor is this an old man's idle pipe dream, for it is on the record that Jennings has met most of the old-time law officers and badmen. He was, in particular, buddies with Billy the Kid.

The whole fascinating subject of the fine art of gun-slinging is nearly hopelessly mired and obscured by a morass of conflicting and controversial fact, clouded romantic fancy and literary license.

DID gunfighters "fan" their weapons? Did Wild Bill Hickok always perforate his hapless victims with gun arm fully extended? Did Wyatt Earp shoot just as the muzzle cleared the holster? Was the average Western "gun" a reckless sadist, a paranoic? Or was he an astute, cautious, and in-

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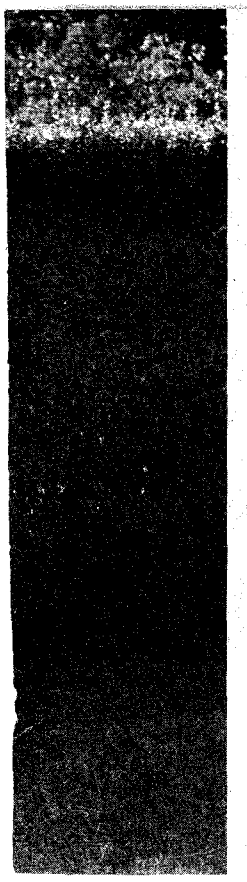
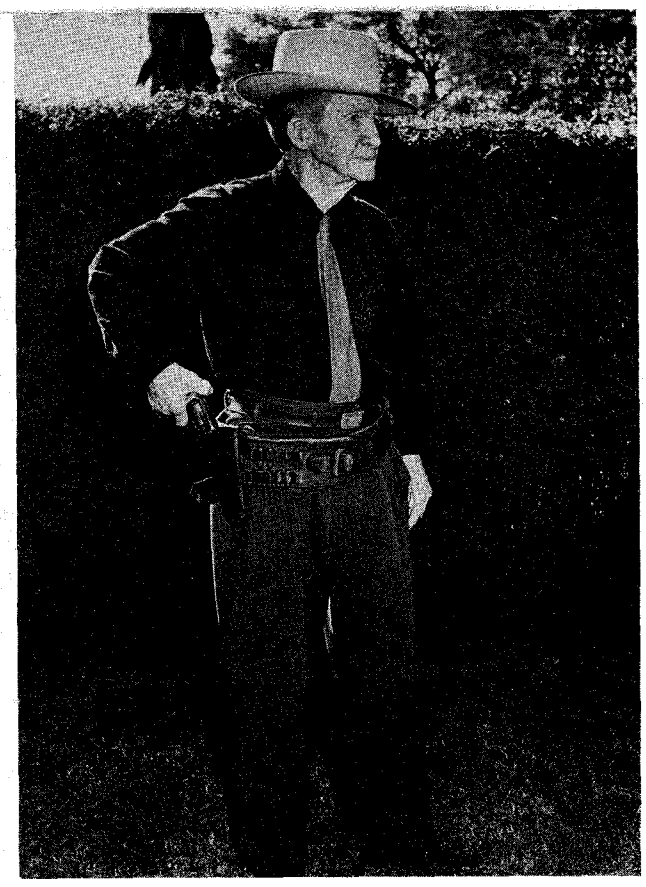
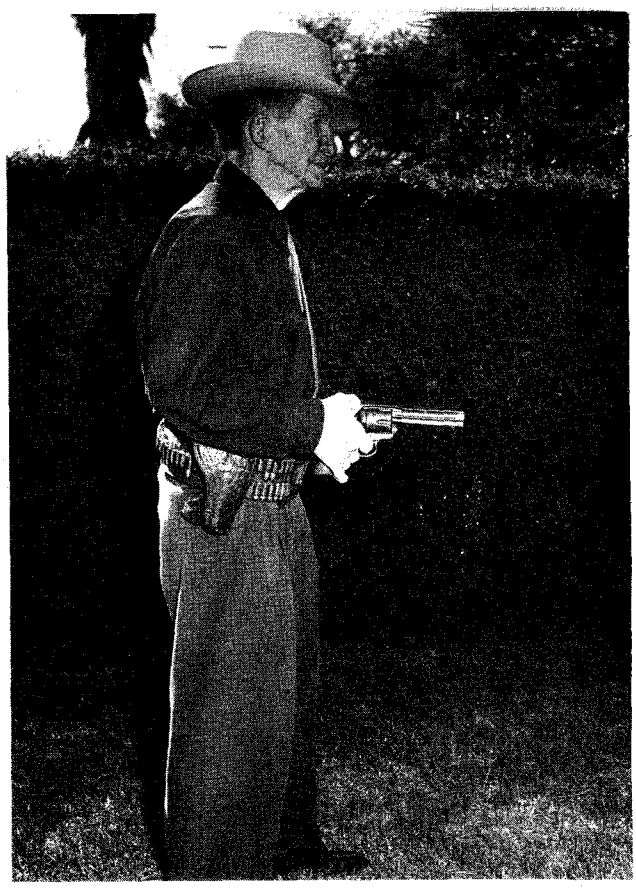




The most important part of the draw. In another split-second comes the shot!



This photo demonstrates Jennings' particular stance for close-up gun-fighting. Note that it varies from the stance used by other old-time gun-fighters. Many fired from the hip; others with gun arm extended.

THEY REALLY DID IT

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

telligent fellow? Your guess is as good as ours, and we've heard it from good authority both ways.

A close guess might be that all these men differed in method, thinking, and personality. We do not think that we have solved the riddle of all the gunfighters, good or bad. But we *do* think it would be interesting to hear from the lips of one ex-gunfighter how *he* did it.

Fortunately then, for us who are still in the dark about such matters, Al Jennings' mind is as alert and his memory as keen as the average man of fifty. He is, without question, a highly intelligent man. His courage, coolness, and resourcefulness—both while leading a life of crime and after—has been thoroughly documented.

When asked about his twenty-odd shooting scrapes, Al's frosty blue eyes twinkled and he dryly remarked: "In retrospect, I'm neither glad nor sorry that they happened. They were necessary at the time—it was either shoot or be shot." He told us of several such deadly affrays. One which stands out in Al's memory was a moonlight duel between him and some law officer whom he would prefer remain nameless. In the course of robbing a post office, Jennings ordered this man to "throw up your hands or you're a dead man!" Both fired simultaneously. The officer's bullet, of .45 caliber, furrowed Jennings' wrist, made a curvy, freakish ricochet up his arm inside the coat-sleeve and lodged in his shoulder. "Bled like the dickens," Al recalls.

Jennings' bullet hit the cylinder of his opponent's gun. Metal flew, with one piece piercing the unlucky officer's belly and another his throat just below the chin.

Another scrape, not strictly a gun duel but noteworthy nonetheless, was the time that Jennings and two of his men got pinned down in a flimsy shack surrounded by forty deputies and five U. S. marshals. When the shooting stopped, there were over 500 bullet holes in the shack and Jennings was hit, surprisingly, only three times.

Because Jennings is a lucid and graphic speaker, and has given freely of his experiences in the past, practically all of his exploits have been lifted verbatim and credited to fictional characters in books, magazines, movie, television and radio scripts. Thus Al finds himself in the unique and exasperating position of having some folks think he has borrowed from the entertainment mediums in the telling of his actual experiences. Understandably, this makes Mr. Jennings hopping mad on occasion.

Al has helped many famous authors with characterizations and even plots. Owen Wister, Jennings recalls, copied his manner of speaking in *The Virginian*. And he says he gave his friend Bill Porter (O. Henry) the idea for The Cisco Kid, among others. Al asked him to change the nationality of the character, which O. Henry dutifully did, making the soon-to-be famous Kid of Mexican descent.

JENNINGS tells with relish of the time when he was busily engaged at one of his more profitable ventures, the robbing of a crack passenger train. He was doing the chore with his customary expertness when he came to a little girl who proceeded to cower, shiver, and then toss her diminutive purse at him with an unflattering remark. Halting his harvest for the moment, Jennings found the toy purse contained an old

(Continued on following page)

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Canoga Park Herald

CANOGA PARK, CALIFORNIA, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1957

WEST VALLEY PHOTO REPORT

Ex-Badman Al Jennings Now Lives On Quiet Ranch Here

FORMER PAL OF BILLY THE KID, NOW 90, REVIEWS SCRAPBOOKS, PLAYS SOLITAIRE

Front page of the *Canoga Park Herald*, Canoga Park, California, containing "The Al Jennings Story."

Close-up of Al Jennings' six-gun in owner's hand.

brass locket, some buttons and other trivia precious to the very young. Before handing the purse gently back to the perturbed young lady, he stuffed it full of paper money. "Yellowbacks," Al remembers with a smile of satisfaction.

Another Jennings favorite is the anecdote of how he arranged a wolf hunt for the indefatigable sportsman, Teddy Roosevelt. "Very successful hunt," grins Al. "I even trained the wolf!"

Jennings grumbled a little when we asked him to demonstrate *his* method of procedure in successfully coping with an armed and hostile citizen. He said he did not see what good it could do anybody "now-a-days." But once he started, he proceeded with customary thoroughness to make it quite plain.

Al Jennings speaking:

Well, I was a good shot from the time I was a small boy. I enjoyed shooting and did quite a lot of it. Later, a fellow named Jim Stanton taught me how to watch another man's eyes. His theory was that when a man has definitely made up his mind to draw it will show in his eyes, and Jim was right. Of course you dare not blink or you may miss it. I always went by this and it always gave me a slight edge. Incidentally, Jim said my temper would lead me to an early grave, but he was wrong about that.

I still have my favorite gun, this one here, a Colt Frontier six-shooter in .45 caliber for maximum knock-down power. I took the trigger out, smoothed the knurling on the hammer, and removed the front sight so it would not hang up in the holster. This is the holster, see how she's worn through? This is a different belt; someone stole my old belt when I was in prison but this one is much like it.

When I knew I was going to have trouble with a man, it was my habit to try and work things so I could get as close to him as possible, the closer the better. This had two advantages for me. It enabled me to watch his eyes better, and also eliminate the possibility of a miss. I drew and fired in one motion, like this. You see, as soon as the muzzle cleared the holster I snapped the hammer by jerking the gun with a hard down motion, then stopping the movement abruptly at the instant of firing. Now see, here we go again, all in one motion this time. Get it? Now watch closely and we'll do it again. See?

I'm not as fast as I used to be. (Note: *This* is not as fast? ? Wow!) In firing the gun I held it loosely high on the grip and tried to point about 6 to 8 inches, depending upon distance, below where I wanted to hit, usually the breastbone. I seem to recall a couple fellows getting hit in the belly but they were the real obnoxious type.

I don't want you, now, to get the idea I desire to be known as a gunfighter. Any gun-play I have had was in the course of other things and I never wanted it or looked for it. I never killed for hire in my life. I only used a gun as my last resort and when my life was in danger. I always respected and admired most of the officers of the law I came in contact with, and many of them were later my friends. They were only doing a job.

I DID most of my shooting with the gun you see here, but I had others and always carried an extra in a shoulder holster. Most all the boys did this and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Fanning? I never did see anyone fan a gun unless maybe it was hot. I *have* seen them do it in the movies! How far could I shoot straight this way? Well, with the chips down, drawing and shooting as fast as possible, I was fairly certain of hitting a man solid-like, putting him out of business, about the length of this room (25 feet) but as I said before I preferred to get closer if possible. There were times when some fat-head might pull down on you from a longer distance.

Speaking of the term "fathead," that is one we used to use on the range in the early days in Texas, Kansas and the Indian Territory, way back when the buffalo were still there. Well, anyway, one time a French journalist came down and hung around listening to our lingo and finally he went back and wrote a story in French about us. Later the story was translated into English and I read it. All the way through the story the term "fathead" came out as "skull full of lard." Good — ! I never did see anything so silly.

Aiming? I suppose everyone has to aim one way or another. Possibly it's a matter of practice and skill. So I prefer to think of my shooting as about like a third baseman whirling and making a fast throw to home.

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Front row: left to right: Ignacio, leader in the Meeker Massacre; Hon. Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior; Ouray, Chief of the Utes; Chipeta, Queen of the Utes. Standing, left to right: Woretsiz, Ouray's Aide; Gen. Chas. Adams, former Indian Agent.

QUEEN OF THE UTES

When the Great White Father called Ute Chief Ouray to Washington for council, Chipeta, his wild beautiful squaw, tagged along. She stole the show!

By EVERETT BAIR

WASHINGTON newspapers and social circles were all agog. There was always the contagious excitement that swept the Capitol preceding the arrival of a notable and his lady, but this was different. This was eager anticipation of the new and the wild. Ute chief Ouray and his queen, Chipeta, were to be the honored guests of President Hayes and Congress during a treaty council set for March 6, 1880.

Social Washington had never laid eyes on a real honest-to-Betsy Indian queen, and the news of her impending arrival set cliques battling for first chance to entertain the barbaric royal couple. Chief Ouray was headlined in Washington papers much like a visiting Rajah. Reporters outdid themselves lauding Queen Chipeta with a string of flattering adjectives. The stage was set for a glittering blow-out the like of which Washington had never seen.

West of the Mississippi, where the Indian was never glorified, the royal preparations were tagged as idiotic. In Western Colorado, the few newspapers referred to the Capitol visitors by names far less flattering than those being lavished on them in Washington.

Chipeta's career was beyond anything ever written of an Indian woman. Even Fenimore Cooper's romantic descriptions of early Indian life did not remotely approach her in appearance or character. She had become widely known just before and after the Meeker Massacre that occurred September 29, 1879. Much as the West hated the Utes, Chipeta endeared herself to many of the settlers and to the very white soldiers sent to hunt down her people.

When the sub-chiefs, Ignacio and Captain Jack, incited the bloody tragedy at the White River Agency by murdering Agent Meeker and all his staff and capturing Meeker's wife and daughter Josie, Ouray was notified by runner at his village south of the present city of Montrose, Colorado. He immediately dispatched a messenger with orders to Ignacio to cease fighting and release the captives. The order was disobeyed.

Against Ouray's pleadings, Chipeta saddled up her fleetest pony and raced off on the hundred-mile ride over unmarked mountain territory. Arriving at the devastated White River Agency, she scouted around until she located the "squaw camp" where the white women and children were held.

Meeker's daughter, Josie, testified to Government investigators that Chipeta stood constantly by, protecting the white women from molestation. "She was an angel of mercy," testified Josie, "ministering to our needs in every way possible until the moment of our liberation."

The battle smoke had nearly settled over the White River country by the early part of 1880, but hatred between whites and Indians still smoldered. It was plain that the Utes and the settlers could not peaceably occupy the same country. Cattle raising and mine development were crowding in on the Ute hunting grounds to which the tribe had formerly been assigned. When the angry Utes were not openly attacking the settlers, they were firing the forests and stealing horses and cattle. The battle-cry of the harried settlers was "the Utes must go!" Washington was besieged with appeals for troops to drive out the Indians. The situation became increasingly desperate.

RIGHT at this tense period a respite prevailed for a time. In conformity with their republican form of government, the Utes held their regular election of a head chief. Ouray,

(Continued on page 42)

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Any rodeo contestant would have sold his soul for the honor of being known as the man who rode Midnight, the world's

BUCKINGEST BRONC

By FORBES PARKHILL

THE first time Jim McNab tried to break the big black colt to the saddle, he allowed as he picked himself up from the corral dust as how he reckoned that daggoned midnight horse must have been sired by a sidewinder and foaled by a hellcat.

Maybe Jim's judgment was warped by the bronc's terrific bucking, which he swore jarred his backbone clean up through the crown of his ten-gallon hat, but later some five hundred of the world's top rodeo riders, having failed to tame the midnight gelding, admitted that Jim hadn't been talking through his Stetson.

The bronc that spilled Jim so explosively was Midnight, who, most of the top-hand rodeo riders will tell you, was the buckingest horse that ever lived. And this takes in enough territory to include old Steamboat, in his day regarded as the toughest old hellion that ever disguised himself in horsehide.

His owners say the man never lived who could ride Midnight under standard rodeo rules, though two bronc peelers laid claim to the honor of sticking with him for more than the required ten seconds, during his declining years.

Sired by a Morgan and with a strain of thoroughbred and a dash of Percheron, Midnight was foaled on McNab's Cottonwood ranch near McLeod, Alberta, Canada, in 1915. When he got his growth he stood fifteen hands and one finger high and weighed 1,250 pounds. He was big and rough and tough and ungainly, with the strength of a thirty-ton tank, the voltage of a powerhouse, the stubbornness of a stalled truck and the disposition of a buzz saw.

Sometimes you hear the yarn that Midnight was broken to the saddle as easily as any fuzztail fresh off the range and was being ridden by a country schoolmarm until the day he was frightened by a newspaper fluttering in the wind, ungallantly dumped the lady into a cactus patch, and turned outlaw.

Midnight usually threw'em clean.
Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce Photo

BUT Jim McNab is an authority for the story that Midnight was brought in from the open range with the other fuzzies that were old enough to break, and unloaded his then owner three times out of three, which no horse had ever done before.

Jim was plenty sore, physically and figuratively, so he called on Joe Stump, his top-hand Indian horse wrangler. Joe climbed aboard the black and did something he'd never done before—described a parabola. When he came to, he drew his time and hied himself back to the reservation mumbling "Ugh," which means "Nuts to the white man's civilization."

All Jim McNab's close neighbors within a radius of sixty miles heard about the big black, and one by one dropped in to take a whirl at him and one by one rode back home with pillows in their saddles.

Finally the word got around to Twenty-one Johnson. Twenty-one modestly admitted he could tame the worst outlaw bronc with a silver dollar in each stirrup without losing a dime. He used a saddle with an eighteen-inch swell that virtually padlocked him to his horse.

So the story goes, Twenty-one showed up at Jim's place with fifty bucks that said he could ride the midnight bronc into the ground. At the third jump, Midnight snapped him back so violently that his head thumped the horse's caboose and blood began to leak from his nose and ears. Twenty-one lost his stirrups and his riding rope, and when they brought him 'round with a bucket of water, found he'd lost his rep and his fifty bucks.

Up to 1925 Midnight retained his amateur status, bucking just for the fun of it. He went pro when Jim sold him down river to Pete Welsh for a reported price of $100, and became one of Pete's string of wild horses supplied chiefly to Canadian rodeos.

MIDNIGHT first electrified the cash customers at the Edmonton Jubilee. He was in fast company, but made the toughest rodeo buckaroos look like thirty cents in Canadian dimes. The boys at the Edmonton show were tops, but none of 'em warmed Midnight's saddle long enough to spit twice.

Meanwhile Verne Elliott, Colorado cowboy who had won fame by topping the notorious old Steamboat at the Ogden, Utah, rodeo in 1910, had retired from active competition upon incurring an injury calculated to cramp his style slightly—a broken back.

He formed a partnership with Ed McCarty, winner of the Cheyenne Frontier Days bucking championship a few years later. They supplied bucking horses, riders, Brahma steers, trick ropers and most of the pep and vinegar for rodeos in the United States and Canada.

Guy Weadick, impresario of the Calgary Stampede, wrote them about the unridable black gelding. Verne, just finishing the Pendleton show, corraled four of the greatest riders in the business under the grandstand. All were heading for the Winnipeg show, and Verne said that if Midnight was good enough to toss any one of 'em, he'd sure 'nough buy him. These boys were Hugh Strickland, Paddy Ryan, Bob Askins and Bert Civits. Any one of 'em could stick to a bolt of lightning, but later they reported to Verne that Midnight was as hard to handle as a skillet of rattlesnakes.

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Out West Photo, Cheyenne, Wyo.

Midnight, buckingest bronc that ever lived, piles another rider.

So Verne bought him for $250 and took him to the Elliott & McCarty winter quarters at Fort Worth. When the black outlaw appeared at the Fort Worth rodeo in 1928 the newspapers were blazoning his fame.

An old-time cattleman who had struck oil on his outfit offered to plank down cash money on a cowpuncher who, he said, would make Midnight look as if he'd learned his bucking on a merry-go-round.

His needling got under Verne's hide, so he took him up. When the rodeo riders learned of the bet they insisted on adding to Verne's $2,000 until a pot of $5,000 had been raised. The ranchman produced a huge, powerful horse wrangler from the Fort Worth stockyards.

Modern rodeo rules require a rider to stay in the saddle ten seconds, using only one rein, which can't be knotted or wrapped about the wrist. He must ride with one hand in the air and can't change hands on the rein. He must come out of the chute raking his horse on the shoulders with his spurs and then must shift and rake his flanks.

He's disqualified if thrown; if he "pulls leather," which means grabbing the saddle horn; or if he "blows" a stirrup. Application of resin to the seat of the pants is barred.

VERNE waived all rules except the time limit and "pulling leather." The wrangler was simply to "ride 'im slick, cowboy style."

"He leaned down and got a short holt on the rein," says Verne, "figuring to hold Midnight's head close by main strength, which is okay if you can get away with it. When the chute opened, Midnight won the bet for us just by wrinkling his backbone and sticking out his nose, jerking the rider out of the saddle by the rein. The wrangler didn't get as far as you could throw a post hole."

Still unconvinced, the ranchman wanted to bet he could pick another rider who could tame Midnight. Verne and Ed bet $3,000 of the rodeo pool money that he couldn't. This time the rider was Pete Knight, rodeo veteran and one of the greatest riders that ever lived. The ranchman offered Pete $2,500 if he stuck with Midnight.

The bronc shot out of the chute with the fury of a wildcat with a knot in its tail and launched into a series of terrific walking-beam, or straight-ahead, pitches. At the first buck, Pete showed daylight between his pants and the saddle. At the second he blew a stirrup. With the third jump, Midnight stuck his bill in the ground and kicked a hole through the clouds. The cantleboard of the saddle spanked Pete out in the air for a swan dive ending in a four-point landing.

Subsequently Pete drew Midnight out of the hat in more rodeos than any other rider and came nearest to mastering him. He tackled him at Fort Worth, Columbus, Vancouver, Pendleton and Cheyenne. At Cheyenne, the year Pete won the championship, the management, as an added attraction, offered him $100 if he could ride Midnight. This time he stuck with him for seven and one-half seconds before he was tossed.

Pete died with his boots on at Hayward, California, where he was trampled to death by an outlaw horse.

Earl Thode of Belvedere, S. D., world champion bronco buster in 1927, 1931 and 1932, drew Midnight at four rodeos and probably kissed away more prize money than any other contestant because of the big, black bronc.

After leaving Midnight with a cool saddle in three rodeos, Eddie Woods ciphered it out this way:

"When he pitches, the front of the saddle skyrockets up against your chin, and you wake up in the ambulance."

WHEN Midnight's enormous front hoofs jarred the ground, it was enough to jolt a man's inwards loose from his ribs. After being projectiled at Toronto and laid low at the National Western at Denver, Paddy Ryan reported, "When he unhinges, he all but breaks a man apart."

Verne Elliott says Midnight customarily throwed 'em clear; seldom let 'em leak off the side of the saddle like some of these penny ante buckers. *(Continued on page 39)*

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Lured by promises of wealth, many of the foreign-born soldiers deserted Fort Brown to join the Mexican Army, only to lose their lives when the Americans stormed Monterrey in 1846.

Van Dorn scooped up the fallen banner from the dust, flung it back to the breeze, and the aide fastened it securely.

RENEGADE

By RIVERS LODGE

NEAR dawn on a May morning in 1846, a dragoon in the light blue of the American Army of Occupation dashed into Fort Brown just across the Rio Grande from Matamoros. Ten minutes later, having obtained immediate audience with General Zachary Taylor, the dragoon dashed out again.

At daybreak, General Taylor and his cavalry filed out of the fort and rode in the direction of Point Isabel, where the American supply depot was in peril.

From his hiding place in a chaparral thicket, a Mexican lancer observed their departure. Quickly he mounted his horse and galloped off to report to his commander that the fort had been abandoned, in accordance with an earlier Mexican demand. Broadsides were run off, telling the populace of the great Mexican victory. All night the soldiers and the townspeople feasted, danced and drank in celebration.

But the fort, though open to attack on all sides, had not been abandoned. Shut up within the stuffy shelter were five hundred men sworn to the service of the United States in its struggle with Mexico over a strip of land 119 miles wide, lying between the Nueces and the Rio Grande Rivers. Among that force, commanded by Major Jacob Brown, were young West Pointers whose names would later be household words as Indian fighters in Western territory, and as Southern Generals in the coming Civil War. Outstanding of these young officers was Lieutenant of Artillery Braxton Bragg, and Second Lieutenant Earl Van Dorn, born in Mississippi, whom Texas would love as a son.

In strange contrast to these "book soldiers" were numbers of French, Polish, and Irish immigrants, who—suffering from famine and oppression in their own countries—had joined the U. S. Army with two primary objectives—to eat and to fight.

One week after his departure from Fort Brown, General Taylor reached Point Isabel, twenty-two miles away. Mexican General Arista, hampered by slow-moving troops and the jealous conniving of rival generals, had barely swung his army into position when the Americans poured through. Arista had to content himself with fortifying a small village along the road over which Taylor would have to return—Resaca de la Palma—and ordering up a battery of seven guns to open on the supposedly abandoned fort.

When the Mexicans opened on the fort with their 8-pounders, they were amazed to find their fire returned by 18-pounders. The bigger guns of the Americans fired slowly but

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steadily, as General Taylor had ordered them to conserve ammunition until he returned. For five hours the Mexicans kept up their fire, but with diminishing energy and effect. Far off, at Point Isabel, Second Lieutenant Ulysses Grant (then known as "Sam" to his classmates and companions) heard the rumble of the distant artillery fire, and announced that he was sorry he had enlisted. The ominous booming of those cannon meant real war.

LIEUTENANT U. S. GRANT was not the only soldier to regret enlisting. Many of the new-made soldiers from other lands felt sorry too. Broadsides had been smuggled in to them by Mexican spies, addressed particularly to those French, Polish, and Irish immigrants among the troops who were children of the Mother Catholic Church. The Mexicans, the papers said, were brothers in faith to these men, although counted as enemies by the barbarous Americans, who were usurpers and war-mongers. Let any man but leave the heretic Americans and come over to the Mexicans, and they might have rich uniforms trimmed in gold lace and silver buckles, a feast or fandango every night with alluring and acquiescent women companions to bring them joy. After the brave Mexican army chased the Americans back across the Rio Grande, each man who had left the Gringo dogs would receive 320 acres of land, with more for any officers who would come. Many fell for the propaganda; some reached the Mexican lines, many others were shot as they ran or when they tried to swim the river.

When word reached Washington of these shootings, the Whigs, who had opposed the movement of American troops on Mexico from the first, raised a terrific commotion. A resolution was introduced which would have summarily court-martialed any officer or soldier who shot a deserter without proper trial and inquiry into the cause for desertion. The resolution was defeated.

The National Police Gazette, which had been struggling for existence, then bounced out of the red by publishing lists of deserters. The Government bought up hundreds of copies of the *Gazette* and sent them to the loyal troops. By the time the lists reached the fighting front, they were no longer useful. The embattled boys behind the smoking cannon of Fort Brown cared not a whit about trials or reasons for deserting. When they caught a man sneaking off to the enemy, they simply shot him. A bullet neatly settled his problems without recourse to military courts of law.

Now couriers raced their horses through the scattered Mexican lines to inquire of Major Brown if the fort could hold out. Brown sent word back to Taylor that his men would

BATTALION

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM LOECHEL

hold it while breath remained in their bodies. The American guns were mostly silent now, the men conserving their small stock of ammunition and keeping to their bomb-proofs. The besieging Mexicans reported jubilantly to their commander that most of the hated Gringos were dead. Nevertheless, they dared not attack.

Under cover of night, a detail of Mexicans crossed the river, got behind the fort and set up a battery. At dawn the Americans were awakened by a thunderous cannonade from front and rear. The fort's gunners fired back all through the roaring dawn and morning. At noon the powder-blackened cannoneers were plenty tired, but their losses had been light. The fort still held; and a hundred yards out front, the starry flag still flew.

MORE deserters crept out in darkness, until there were enough of them serving with the Mexicans to form the detested St. Patrick's Battalion. The weary men sweating it out behind the battered fortifications until their General and the main force of their army should come, thought grimly of the terrible vengeance they would exact if ever they met the treacherous renegades in action.

The siege continued for days. Grape, canister, and musket balls swept the walls. Howitzer shells pounded the gun emplacements, while the men stayed at their posts and kept the guns slowly firing with almost the last of their ammunition. Now the eyes of the gunners were sunk deep in their sockets; the men were so perilously close to complete exhaustion they clung to their pieces for support. The end could not be long delayed unless General Taylor came quickly.

Major Brown went from one gun to another, cheering the staggering cannoneers with his presence. A fragment of an exploding shell struck the Major, knocked him down. Two gunners picked him up and carried him into a bomb-proof. Gently they laid him down, tried hopelessly to make him comfortable. Despite his shattered leg, Brown fought hard to live. Gasping in the fetid air, acrid with powder smoke and foul with the odor of sweating men, Major Brown did not long survive his frightful wound. Mercifully, death came quickly to release the dying commander from his agony.

The situation of the garrison was now desperate—the commander dead, men exhausted, ammunition almost gone. They began now to fire the signal guns, spaced at intervals, calling for the aid promised them. The Mexicans surmised the meaning of the regularly spaced gun-fire, and redoubled their bombardment, hoping to reduce the fort and capture the garrison before help could arrive from Point Isabel.

The guns of the fort fell silent after the signal shots, and the Mexicans promptly sent in an officer under a flag of truce to demand surrender. Captain Hawkins, who had succeeded to the command, politely refused. The officer went back to the Mexican lines—and the enemy guns now opened on the fort from four different directions. The garrison responded with musket fire and an occasional cannon shot.

By noon the Americans—who had been on half rations for days—expected an assault momentarily. Many were too exhausted to care about either food or danger. Lieutenant Van Dorn was everywhere about the fort, fearlessly exposing himself in the most dangerous spots, cracking jokes, telling stories, praising men who had done well, urging on those who had grown despondent.

Suddenly a lookout cried out in dismay—the flag before the fort had been shot down. Captain Hawkins called for volunteers, and instantly Lieutenant Van Dorn and an aide responded. Slipping through the front gate, the two men raced through a hail of shot—"like humming birds in my mother's garden," Van Dorn later declared—right into the heavy Mexican fire. Van Dorn scooped up the fallen banner from the dust, flung it back to the breeze, and the aide fastened it securely.

Hazardous mission accomplished, they sprinted back to the fort. Van Dorn scratched his ankle, dodging a shell which would have taken off a leg. He stooped low, on impulse, and a cannon ball whizzed over his head that would have decapitated him had he been standing upright. Unwounded, the valiant pair reached the fort as their comrades sent up a ringing cheer.

Now, as if in recognition of the gallant deed, came the sound of heavy cannon fire in the direction of Point Isabel—Resaca de la Palma was being fiercely contested by Grant, Longstreet, and the others. "Old Rough and Ready" was fighting his way back to his boys. A tremendous shout rose from the hardy remnant of the garrison.

Winning the scrap at Resaca de la Palma, the rescuing Americans raced on toward Fort Brown. As they neared it, a wild, exultant cheer went up from their marching ranks, to be answered by the cheers of the garrison. After 140 hours of intensive bombardment, the flag, the fort, and the gallant defenders were still there.

IN MATAMOROS, a great feast had been prepared for the victorious Mexican army expected that evening. Every house was decked with garlands for the conquering heroes, and every girl wore flowers in her hair. The Americans spoiled everything; driving the defeated army through Matamoros and leaving only a desolate town of wailing, anguished women, who tore down the gay banners from their houses and shrieked their grief as burro after burro came into town bearing on their backs, like so many sacks of meal, the grisly remains of what had once been men.

The invincible Americans drove on through Mier, Reynosa, Comargo, and bore down on Ceravlo. The Mexicans did not fight—except among themselves—for more than a day at a time, when they had food or were forced to fight in self-defense. After every stand they broke and fled, running, running, always waiting for reinforcements and supplies that never came.

(Continued on page 36)

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NINETEEN MONTHS WITH THE COMANCHES

By JACK DERDEN

Here is a little-known epic of frontier courage and resourcefulness, as displayed by a pioneer woman.

Illustrated by Al Martin Napoletano

ON May 19, 1836, a huge war party of Comanches and Kiowas swooped down on Fort Parker, on the headwaters of the Navasota River in Limestone County, Texas. Employing a flag of truce to effect entrance to the stockade, the Indians massacred most of the forty or so whites inside the fort, but carried off Rachel Plummer and her two-year-old son, and little Cynthia Ann Parker and her brother John. The story of Cynthia Ann is well-known; the dramatic tale of Rachel Plummer comparatively unknown. Yet the story of Rachel Plummer's nineteen months with the Comanches forms one of the most stirring accounts of pioneer courage and fortitude ever known on the American frontier.

Knocked senseless at the start of the Indian attack, Rachel remained in a dazed condition until she found herself being hustled north by her captors at daybreak next morning. For five straight days the Comanches hurried her on, allowing her no food and very little water. On the fifth day, the Indians brought her son to her because he had been crying since his capture. When they discovered that little Jimmy had been weaned, they tore him loose from her arms. She never learned what became of him for she never saw him again.

From the fort, Rachel moved northeast with the Comanches until she reached the Red River. Crossing the Red River, the band hurried on northwest until the Rockies were reached. Although it was now July, snow had appeared on the higher slopes and it was bitterly cold at night. Rachel suffered greatly, as she had no shoes and few clothes. Her feet became badly frostbitten, but the Indians ignored her sufferings.

All this time she was forced by her captors to dress buffalo skins by day and wrangle horses at night. Usually she had so many buffalo hides to dress she had to do them at night while attending the horses.

An old Indian with a wife and only one daughter adopted her. The dreary months passed, and by October she had learned to speak the Comanche language. The other two women of her household were hard but thorough teachers. She had to refer to them as mistresses and to address the old man as "Master."

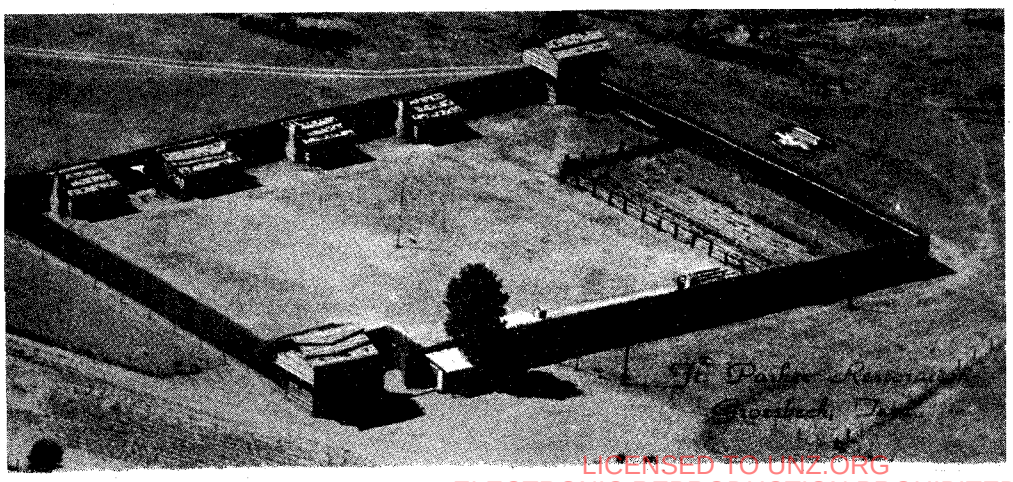
In October she gave birth to her second son, and had to be up and moving the same day. A birth did not delay the Comanches if they wanted to travel. In fact, the lives of both mother and child were in jeopardy if they hindered the band in any manner. Knowing this, Rachel began to fear for her new-born child.

Her fears were soon realized. Seeing that the infant was hindering Rachel's work, the old man ordered it killed. Three Indians entered the lodge, grabbed the six-weeks-old baby from her arms and started to tear it apart. The mother screamed in horror and rushed at them, but the burly braves pushed her aside and tossed the child through the lodge opening to land on the frozen ground. They gave it back to her then—but when they saw signs of life in the tiny body, they tore it again from her arms, tied a rawhide rope around its neck and dragged it through prickly pears until it died.

RACHEL PLUMMER never forgave her captors for this horrible act. Her feeling was not softened by the realization that her child had been "executed" according to tribal law. The Comanche edict was inflexible—death was meted out mercilessly to anyone, no matter how helpless, who could not contribute to the tribal welfare. Rachel saw more than one aged Indian man or woman left to die alone on the cold mountains because they were too old and weak to travel. Death was a daily occurrence in the Comanche camp. Rachel herself often prayed for death to release her from her bondage.

From the mountains she traveled with the Comanches to the prairie, to the Salt

Fort Parker Restoration, Groesbeck, Texas.



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White captive and red captor fought furiously until the squaw collapsed from the beating she received from Rachel Plummer.

Plains (or sand dunes), and then on to the Great Salt Lake. On these journeys she acquainted herself with the wild animals, for her captors taught her that her new religion was handed down to them through the lesser deities—the animals. The otter, the mink, the bear and the eagle had received the story of the origin of Creation direct from the Great Spirit, and these lower animals had imparted this information to the Comanches. Her immediate clan worshiped the eagle, so Rachel was given an eagle's wing to wear as the symbol of her tutelary god.

Dancing became a part of her new religion. Torturing prisoners was also a part of her new faith. She offered sacrifices to the gods through the shaman. Of course Rachel did not believe in the Comanches' religion, but it was expedient that she pretend that she did. Savage and terrible as the Comanches were, they were devout in their religious beliefs. During her stay with them, Rachel saw several braves expelled from the tribe because they expressed disbelief in a Supreme Power.

She listened to her old mistress tell about the preposterous Man Tiger—a nine-foot-tall animal with features of a man, yet with paws and claws like a tiger. The Man Tiger was the protector of the cave-men, the pygmies of the mountains. The old squaw cautioned Rachel never to go into the mountains alone or to molest the three-foot pygmies for fear of frightful retaliation by the Man Tiger.

Rachel was always on the go. At one time or another she passed through the country of the Pawnees, the Navajos, the Chemuhuevi, the Apaches, and other tribes. Once in the Rockies she picked up so many gold nuggets she had to get her young mistress to help carry them, but was forced to give them up to the old squaw who ruled her lodge. (This was twelve years before the California Gold Rush of 1849.)

At another time, in the foothills of the Rockies, Rachel discovered a cave with rocks guarding its mouth. She made candles of buffalo tallow and explored the famous Carlsbad Caverns of New Mexico for two days and a night. Her description of the underground stream and her portrayal of the large rooms are proof that Rachel Plummer should long ago have been recognized as the true discoverer of this wonderland of North America.

SHE wrote, in part:

"...I felt a great anxiety to find out the cause of this strange scene, which upon close examination, was more splendid than the mind can conceive. Reader, you may fancy yourself viewing ...an entirely new planetary system, a thousand times more sublime and more beautiful than our own, and you will fall far short of the reality I here witnessed. I soon discovered that these lights proceeded from the reflections of the light of the candle by the most innumerable crystallized formations in the rocks above, and on either side. The room I was in was large—say 100 feet wide—and its length was beyond my sight."

Bravely, Rachel Plummer pursued her journey to the bowels of the earth.

"For a distance of three or four miles," she goes on, "the cave differed in appearance and width, but nothing worthy of notice was observed. The cave forked, the ceiling or roof of the right hand fork being ten feet high and six feet wide. I went on and entered one of the most spacious and splendid rooms my eyes ever beheld."

On one side of this room was a clear, beautiful stream of water. She followed the stream until she heard the ominous roaring of the water as it fell down a precipice, before turning back.

When she came out of the cave, the Indians were astounded. They thought she had been lost in the bowels of the earth.

Life continued to be hard for Rachel. Rebelling against harsh treatment by her young mistress, she fought with the woman and knocked her down with a buffalo bone. The squaw begged for mercy, so Mrs. Plummer spared her life.

The Indians who had witnessed the brief fight surrounded Rachel, shouting and gesticulating wildly. She resigned herself to being killed, but the warriors patted her on the shoulder, crying *"Bueno! Bueno!"* The Comanches applauded her because they admired anyone who showed strength and courage, and

(Continued on page 34)

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DUTCHMAN'S LOST MINE FOUND?

Here, according to the author, is the first TRUE article ever written on Jacob "Waltz" and his alleged mine in the Superstitions.

ARIZONA

By GEORGE R. MONAGAN

TIME and again, that excited cry has echoed through the canyons of the Superstition Mountains. Yet the only man to bring out any gold was back in 1936, when a lame World War I veteran stumbled out of the mountains with a sack containing $5,000 in gold nuggets. This, however, was confiscated by the authorities when it was proved to be stolen dental gold. Again the excitement died.

Enough of the fantastic has been written and said about the Dutchman's Lost Mine, so let's have a little common-sense for a change. If one were to screen out all the bologna, there wouldn't be much left of any lost mine story. They are all like acorns. Stick one in the ground and in 75 years it will grow into a giant tree. Same with lost mine yarns. Whenever an eager gold hunter hears or reads a tale of a lost mine, he should carefully consider every facet, angle and idea concerning it before heading hellbent for the hills. 99% of all the lost mine stories are B.S. (That stands for Barnyard Spread, son.)

Consider this dilly, for example. One story has it that Jacob Waltz and his Apache squaw skipped out of Phoenix one night without their pack animals, and three days later strolled into town with $70,000 worth of gold on their backs. (And the Dutchman had an arrow wound in his shoulder!) How many people would stop to figure the two were packing roughly three hundred pounds in gold alone? You just can't hardly get that kind of squaw no more!

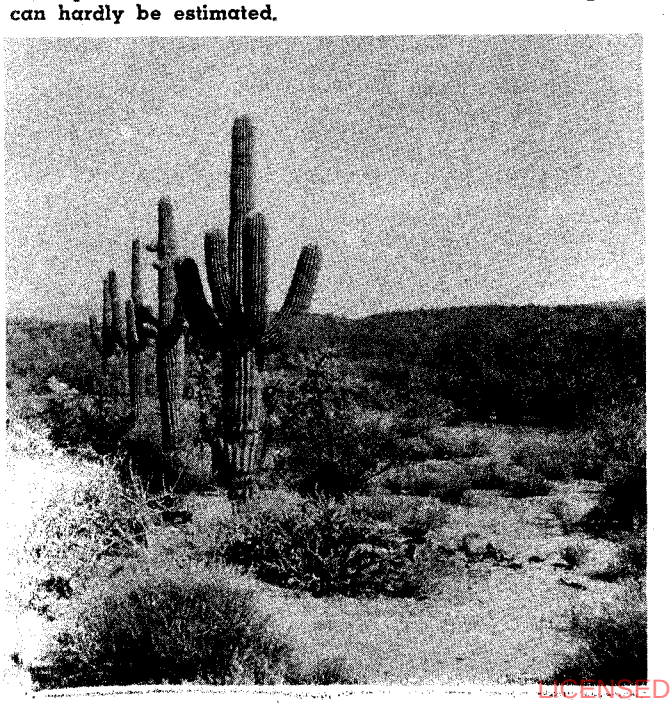
Eight of the nine years I've spent in Arizona were put in at Goldfield on the west end of Superstition Mountain. In 1947, legend had it that the old Dutchman had left three sacks of high-grade ore in the hills which he had already mined but didn't have time to retrieve before his death. What with countless books, magazine yarns, and a movie appearing on the market, there is bound to be considerable confusion among the populace as each author had to come up with new "facts" to sell copy. The original three sacks of gold ore have grown at a pace comparable with the National Debt. And the tall tale tellers would have us believe that Waltz left $40,000,000 worth of gold buried some place.

All this has led thoughtful people to wonder if there ever was a Jacob Waltz and a Dutchman's Lost Mine. But, as proof that he did exist, here is his obituary taken from the *Arizona Daily Gazette* in Phoenix, dated October 27, 1891:

"Jacob Waltz died Sunday evening at the residence of Mrs. J. E. Thomas and was buried yesterday. Deceased was a native of Germany and was 81 years old."

Prior to this, he was also mentioned in the *Herald*, of February 26, 1891, as one of those rescued from the great flood of the Salt River. Those were the only times he succeeded in making the headlines. Surely if he had been hauling in gold by the mule-load, his every movement would have been duly recorded in the newspapers of the period. But many competent persons have searched the newspaper files of that time without once finding a mention of Waltz or his mine. Not until several years after his death is there any write-up about people searching for the Dutchman's Lost Mine. The acorn had started to grow.

Four saguaro cacti, growing in a perfect row, point directly to the old mine in the Goldfield wash. Their age can hardly be estimated.



THIS much we know about Jacob Waltz's past. He was listed in the Territorial Census of April, 1864, Third District (Yavapai County); born in Prussia, Germany, in 1810. Came to Arizona from California in 1862; age 54, occupation miner. Listed in the U. S. Census of 1880 at Phoenix as Jacob Waltz, age 70, occupation farmer. (That's right, farmer.) The name Jacob Waltz also appears on the Great Register of Maricopa County for 1876, age 66; 1882, age 72; and 1886, age 76, as a resident of Phoenix, born in Germany. According to the Register, he was naturalized as an American citizen on July 19, 1861, at Los Angeles, California, in the Court for the First District.

We can also feel quite sure that Waltz worked at the famous Vulture Mine near Wickenburg, Arizona, and was discharged for stealing ore. A reputable party in Phoenix received a letter from a man in California whose father and the old Dutchman took a contract to drive a tunnel at the Vulture Mine. And when they struck good ore, they mined it for themselves. The foreman discovered this and fired them. Before he died, however, the father told his son where they had hidden some of the gold in the White Tank Mountains. The son came to Arizona, found the ore and cashed it in for an undisclosed amount. Also, a tin can was found with some written information about Waltz's family and a small caliber handgun which Jake's father had supposedly brought from Germany. If the writer of that letter would communicate with TRUE WEST, some of the confusion could be cleared up. Was this ore cache the same three sacks of high-grade which the old man hadn't brought to town?

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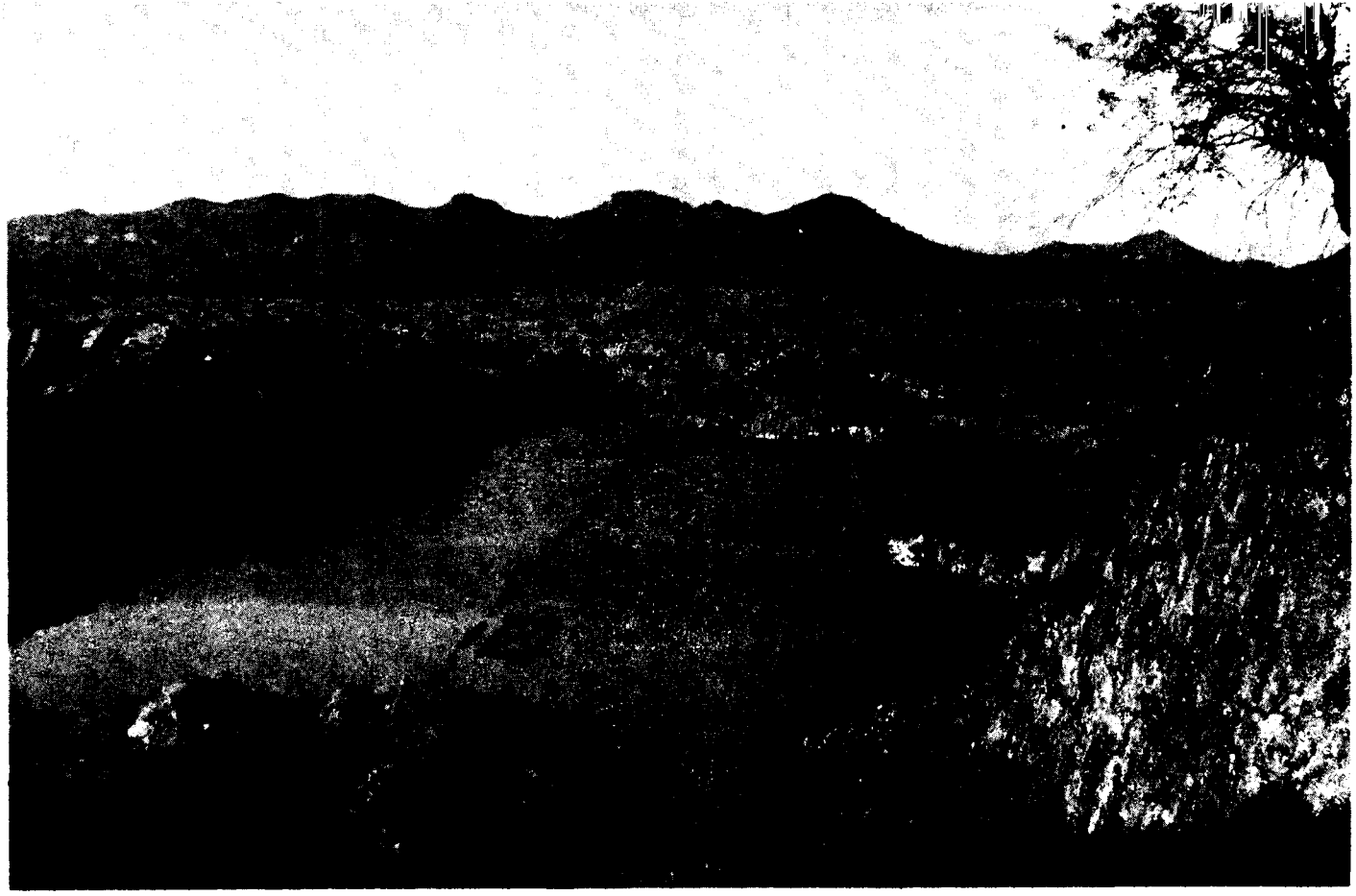

Course of vein.
Outline of Spanish Mine.
Ironwood Timbered Collar.

Photo with markings showing location of the old mine at the bottom of the Goldfield wash.

If this is true, why doesn't every one search in the Superstitions?

However, there is every indication that the Dutchman *did* prospect in the Superstitions. He is reported to have filed on some claims where the Black Queen Mine is at present, one mile north of Goldfield. These claims should still be on record at Florence, but a page by page search of the location notices failed to disclose them. If they were filed before 1875 they may be recorded in Globe, county seat for Gila County.

We are told that Jake found two Mexicans working a mine, shot them and proceeded to work the mine for himself. This is possible, since the Dutchman had at one time been under a peace bond for raising hell while drinking. It is also possible since there are old Spanish mines in the Goldfield and Government Well areas, with the largest at Goldfield.

THIS mine at Goldfield was found around the turn of the century, and was believed to have been the Lost Mine. But the stories hadn't grown big at that time, so the discovery didn't create much of a stir. The mine was found in the bottom of the big Goldfield wash and was responsible for the flooding of the Goldfield Mine. The miners were stopeing up in the rich Mormon Stope toward the bottom of the wash and had planned to halt several feet short of the sand, which was eight feet deep. Unfortunately, some one had dug a large trench along the vein and the miners broke into this trench unexpectedly. Before they could get it sealed off, a cloudburst came over the mountain and the water rose and flooded the mine. About $1,000,000 in gold was taken from the stope before this happened.

Several pieces of Spanish-type drill steel were found in this trench during the last operation of Goldfield in 1950, when a large open pit was dug which engulfed the previous workings. Evidently whoever dug the original trench had trouble with the hole filling every time it rained hard, because they built up an ironwood timbered collar. Then, as they sunk deeper, they would cob off the high-grade quartz and throw the waste into the pit. Perhaps Waltz did find this mine and work it for a while. But, possibly, it was too much for the old boy to clean out the collar every time he needed some beer money. The mine was as well hidden as a mine could be. When found, it had to be discovered in a roundabout way—from the bottom.

Just to the north of Goldfield are four saguaro cacti growing in a row which point directly to the above mine. And to the northeast is a saguaro with a large cross chopped in it. There are two holes poked through this cactus, one pointing to the Government Well area and the other to the trench in the wash. On his death-bed Jake Waltz is supposed to have drawn a map of his mine showing four points to the north, which every one assumed to be Four Peaks Mountain. It is possible that he drew the four cacti, which were only a few feet high at that time. They now measure twenty feet.

We still have no proof that Waltz brought any gold to town —in fact, the following document would indicate that he was just another run-down-at the-heels desert rat.

DEED: Jacob Waltz to Andrew Starar.
Recorded August 8, 1878, at 5 P.M.
Book 3 of Deeds, Pages 322-325
Cons: $50

Description: All the right, title and interest of first party in and to the Northeast one fourth, Section 16, in Township 1 North of Range 3 East of the Gila and Salt River Base Meridian, and of the district of lands subject to sale at the Land Office at Florence, Arizona.

Also certain personal property, and all other personal property of every kind and description now owned by first party whether legal, equitable; whether real, personal or mixed.

And for and in consideration of said above described property and of the possession of the same, second party agrees that during the full continuance of the natural life of party of first part; he, second party, will furnish to first party, all necessary food and clothing required by first party, and all necessaries when sick; he, the second party to take care of first party in degree as one of the family of second party.

The interest and full meaning of the Agreement is that first party shall make over and convey all of his property of every kind to the second party, and second party shall be the full

(Continued on following page)

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Dutchman's Lost Mine Found?

(Continued from preceding page)

owner of same, without any recourse or return to first party, and by these presents first party does make over, transfer and convey to second party all of said property, and in consideration thereof, second party shall feed, clothe and protect said first party, and this the second party agrees to do.

(Signed) Jacob Waltz
Andrew Starar

Acknowleged August 8, 1878, by Jacob Waltz and Andrew Starar, jointly, before John T. Alsop, N. P., Maricopa County, Arizona.

Evidently this agreement was abandoned because a neighboring rancher reported in a 1942 interview that Jacob Waltz lived in such want and poverty that he, the rancher, would take Jake some food occasionally. He also said that Waltz was unable to go prospecting one year because his boots were worn out and he couldn't afford to get them fixed. This was the pathetic condition of the man some folks claim had $40,000,000 in gold buried in the mountains!

So there you have it. A truthful side to the Dutchman's Lost Mine legend that has never before appeared in print. Your writer expects to be tarred and feathered by the Arizona Chambers of Commerce for showing the old boy up in this manner.

But, gold hunters, despair not! Old Superstition Mountain still rears out of the desert and, Lost Mine or not, it is a beautiful place for a hike or a camping trip. Be sure to make it a safe place for yourselves and others by leaving the artillery home and taking something useful, like an extra canteen of water. You may not leave "Ol' Supe" with a sack of gold on your back, but you will have many memories and possibly a souvenir such as the old pistol barrel found by Martin Mevis, of Apache Junction, at the site of the Peralta Massacre on the northwest slope of the mountain. And for those who persist that "thar's gold in them thar hills," perhaps one of the old Spanish ore sacks, dumped by the Apache raiders, is still lying undiscovered in some remote spot.

Of the seven shootings, with three fatalities, in the past six years, three were self-inflicted and four were people who were shot by their companions by mistake. Don't let your trip end in a tragedy. During the three years I conducted pack trips into the mountains no one shot at me nor at anyone with me. But some of the people I was guiding scared me with their careless handling of firearms. Several times I met individuals who were so spooked from reading weird stories of killings and decapitations in the area that they would grab for their hardware at the slightest movement or sound in the bush.

On rocks around nearly every spring and water holes are scratched pictures and symbols, but most of these appear to be Indian in origin. Probably the only authentic remnant of the ill-fated Peralta expedition is a sign on an overhanging boulder in Needle Canyon, proclaiming in large white letters: PEDRO PERALTA SLEPT HERE—1849.

But regardless of the data gathered, here and there, pro and con, within the next few months some excited party will come gushing forth with news of utmost worth. *Have you heard? Have you heard?* . . .

DUTCHMAN'S LOST MINE FOUND! . . . DUTCHMAN'S LOST MINE FOUND!

Editor's Note:

TRUE WEST is giving everybody who is in a position to know anything *first-hand* about the mystery of the Dutchman's Lost Mine a chance to have their say. Hence, the above article by Mr. Monagan. The author wishes it to be distinctly understood that he is not, in any manner, associated with Goldfield Mines.

Haze Over Chilkoot

(Continued from page 13)

packs up from the beach and worked for the white man in any way they could. Their guttural voices mingled with those of men shouting at their teams, the barking of dogs, the crunch of footsteps on snow, and the shushing of sled runners. The smell of spruce intermingled with the wood smoke of a thousand camp fires. Over all hung the sweat-tainted smell of man.

Excitement flooded through me. This was my world now. It was what I'd been seeking so long. This—and what lay ahead. But I was only one of the raw *cheechakos*. That's Chinook for *newcomers*. Chinook is a jargon gotten up by the Hudson Bay Company. "One is never a sourdough until he has seen the ice come and go on the Yukon," I'd been told on the boat.

I'll outstay them all! Charles Edwin McKenzie, an old sourdough.

I grinned as I headed towards the beach.

The "lighters" had floated our stuff up the beach to within one-half mile of Dyea. A great mountain of stuff was piled on the beach. A fellow read out our names and checked us off as we claimed our goods. My goods were all marked C. E. McK. I answered for three fellows from the boat, who hadn't shown up yet.

I moved my outfit up the beach a way, then went to find a driver and a team to sled me up to Sheep Camp, the next step in my journey.

I couldn't find a team at first. Workers and horses were few; the gold-seekers many. Finally I put my name in with a driver and, wild as I was to be off, had to wait my turn. The price for sledding an outfit up to Sheep Camp, twelve miles away, was $10. It didn't seem too high to me.

I had to wait three days in Dyea. The time wasn't wasted, though. I studied maps and learned all I could about the treacherous chain of lakes and rivers that I would have to travel. Long Lake, Lake Linderman, Miles Canyon, with its deadly twin whirlpools, Squaw Rapids, White Horse Rapids, Five Finger Rapids and Windy Arm took their places on the maps and in my mind. The more I heard about what lay ahead, the more anxious I was to get started.

I saw our soldiers again, during my wait in Dyea. I was glad to learn that the famine rumors were unfounded. They were still in Dyea when I left.

A fellow told me something while I was in Dyea that made me realize how far gold hunger can drive a man. He said a man had an old gray mare. He hauled outfits and supplies from Skagway to Lake Bennet with her. The mare brought a fat sum into her mas-

(Continued on page 30)

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THE CU-NE-VA GHOST

By FRED GIPSON

Illustrated By Evans Keith Soward

Colonel Jack didn't wait to argue when the Cu-ne-va Ghost tapped him on the shoulder and asked to share his blankets. He lit out a-running!

SPEAKING of ghosts, now, the late Colonel Jack Potter of Clayton, New Mexico, used to tell about a ghost that tried to get into bed with him one night.

This happened at a place called Cu-ne-va Spring, between Tucumcari and Fort Sumner, back in the 1880's. Colonel Jack was bossing a cow outfit owned by the New England Livestock Company at the time and had brought a bunch of steers to Clayton for shipment over the newly-built Colorado and Southern railroad line.

In a big hurry-up to get back to his family, Colonel Jack saddled a fast-stepping horse, left the trail crew to follow the chuckwagon in, and lit out alone for Fort Sumner, two hundred miles to the south.

The sun had him throwing a long shadow on the prairie when he rode down to Cu-ne-va Spring on the evening of the third day.

The spring seeped out of the ground at the foot of a ridge and had some cottonwoods leaning over it to shade the pool of water. Up the slant a piece was a dugout, set in the side of the hill.

As this was the last water hole Colonel Jack could make before midnight, he figured he'd best camp here till morning.

He was stripping the saddle off his mount when the sun set and he first noticed the owls. They sat in the cottonwoods above the water hole and talked to each other like a couple of gabby old women. Colonel Jack staked his horse out on the graze and built himself a supper fire. Quick as the meat went to frying, a coyote got wind of it and started telling his brothers how good it smelled.

THERE wasn't anything especially spooky about the way those owls talked or that coyote howled, but in a little bit, Colonel Jack found himself recollecting some hair-lifting tales he'd been told about this place.

It seems that back before Colonel Jack's time, a bunch of outlaws had hung out in these parts, waylaying trains along the Santa Fe Trail, killing men right and left. One time they made a big haul and got chased by soldiers to the Cu-ne-va Spring, where they ambushed the soldiers, killing them to the last man. Then, before they could get away with their loot, here came a bunch of Indians to wipe them out—all but one man who got away to tell of it, but who somehow never got back to dig up the treasure they'd buried just before the Indian fight started.

All this killing around the spring and the loot buried close around somewhere had got the place haunted, according to several of Colonel Jack's cowhands, who used up a lot of spare time around the Fort Sumner ranch headquarters telling what they knew about the ghosts. According to Bill Mailand and John Shaw, the place was alive with the ghosts of dead men. Horses could smell the spooks. Let a dog follow a man to the spring and he'd bristle up and whimper and whine around and finally light out for the dugout with his tail tucked. Several cowhands knew of somebody who'd heard strange voices and whistles around the spring of a night. A man named McBroom once slept there and, during the night, listened to the murdered soldiers ride down to the spring and wade their horses off into the water.

And when one cowhand named Tom Skinner told about the time he'd ridden up to the spring and seen a longhorn steer coming in to water singing "Oh, How I Love Jesus," a killing came mighty close to taking place. Those cowhands were convinced the spirits of the dead haunted Cu-ne-va Spring and didn't aim to be made fun of about it.

COLONEL JACK never had taken any stock in these bunkhouse yarns, and he didn't now. He just thought of them, then spread his saddle blankets inside the dugout and went right off to sleep.

And it was nearly daylight before the ghost arrived.

He stepped inside the dugout and tapped Colonel Jack on the shoulder. "Lay over and make room for me!" he said in as plain a voice as you please.

Colonel Jack jumped to his feet and struck a match. The flaring light revealed every square inch of the dugout interior. And there wasn't a soul around! That is, not one with a visible body around it.

Outside, Colonel Jack could hear his horse fighting his picket rope and whistling keen as a deer.

That's when he felt his hair rising under his hat and said to the ghost: "Brother, you can have the whole damned layout!" And he left the dugout on the run.

Less than half a minute later, Colonel Jack had his spooked horse saddled and was half a mile down the trail toward Fort Sumner, whipping over and under.

When I asked Colonel Jack for his explanation of that tap on his shoulder and the voice he'd heard, he got a little red in the face. He said challengingly: "I just got through telling you it was a ghost, didn't I?"

To which I agreed, and we let it go at that. After all, I'd look mighty silly trying to prove that there isn't any such thing as a ghost!

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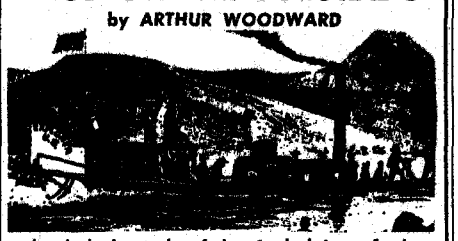

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Haze Over Chilkoot

(Continued from page 28)

ter's pockets and he loaded her heavily. On one trip to Lake Bennet, the mare plodded along slower and slower. Just as she reached her destination, she collapsed and died.

Man talked with man while we waited, and I heard again and again of a strange party of three who were going into Dawson with us—a woman and two men. The woman, her husband, and—her ex-husband. All traveling together, cozy as you please.

There was another strange party of three, in the Dawson-headed crowd. There were two men and a woman in this party, too. The outstanding thing about them was that they were all Negroes, and that one of the men had flaming red hair. He weighed around 160 pounds and was light-colored. Among the thousands of faces, his was unforgettable. His companions were much darker and of average size.

SEEING the mountains of goods piled around, lots of times with nothing but markings to protect them, worried me at first. "What about all these outfits stacked in the open?" I asked a big fellow with friendly dark eyes and an easy grin. "They'd be a big temptation to anyone with itching fingers, wouldn't they?"

The grin left the man's face and his eyes grew rock-hard.

"I don't think anyone will be anxious to steal from the other fellow. *Not* when they hear what we did to a thief last week."

"Treated him pretty rough?" I asked.

"We just gave him the beginning of what nature will probably finish." He spit a stream of tobacco juice and stared after it as it stained the snow. Then he turned to me. "We caught him at Sheep Camp," he went on. "We stripped him of every supply he had. Even his pocketknife. Then we sent him kiting off down the trail. We passed along the word of what he'd done, and you may be sure no one is going to take pity on him. Even the Injuns hate a thief.

"Up here, we figure a thief is the same as a murderer. A man's outfit is his life line. Robbed of that, he'll die."

"Wouldn't he have any chance at all to get out?"

The big fellow eyed me queerly. "The only way would be to catch the first boat out. *But—his reputation went ahead of him.*"

I kept a close watch on my team and driver. Boats kept coming in all the time; new arrivals swarmed up the beach. I grew maddened at the delay. It seemed that everyone was moving ahead but me.

Men drifted back down from Dawson, too. Some with gold to scatter at the gambling-tables, others wild to catch the first boat out.

I teamed up with Billy Hardwick, from Nebraska and we asked all the questions we could. Then my turn came with the team.

SHEEP CAMP lay twelve miles or so up the canyon from Dyea. It was a rough little plateau of three or four acres part way up Chilkoot mountain. It was said that it got its name from a party of American explorers, while Alaska still belonged to Russia.

These men came upon a party of Russians camped there. They tried asking them questions. The Russians talked back as hard as they could, but one of the explorers exclaimed in disgust, "Might as well talk to a bunch of sheep!"

Sheep Camp was a beehive of activity when we arrived. Teams were working up from Dyea. Hundreds of camps were crowded together and goods were piled sky high. Men, and a scattering of women, bent under heavy loads, staggered up the mountain to the summit, three miles above Sheep Camp. Far up, on that dizzy summit, was Chilkoot Pass, gateway to the Klondike.

"Think we'll ever make it, Charlie?" Billing Hardwick squinted his eyes as he watched pack-burdened men digging their way up its snowy sides.

"We can if they can," I said. "Let's get started."

I built my pack up to 200 pounds. Then I cut a heavy club to use in climbing. When I rested, I could slip the club under my pack and take the weight off of my shoulders. Then I strapped the pack on my back and started out.

There were thousands ahead of me on the trail. It was just above freezing, but the sun was blazing down. I had on a hooded mackinaw but hadn't gone far before I had to throw it back. I was sweating before I'd gone half a mile.

Two miles from Sheep Camp, the spruce timber stopped; and I came out above timber line, at Stone House. Everything was white from here on.

Stone House wasn't a house at all. It was a huge, house-shaped rock. It was covered with snow, so I don't know how it really looked. Someone had put a can here and dug a deep, well-like hole in the snow, at the base of the rock. This hole was five or six feet deep, with running water at its bottom. No one passed up the chance for a drink of water. My tongue felt like cloth as I waited my turn at the can. Then I stepped down in the hole and scooped up a drink. It tasted wonderful.

Some teams sledded up as far as Stone House, at an extra high fee; but from there on, clear to the summit, it was a back-packing job. The trail really got rugged from Stone House on. One could just make it without hewed steps. I divided my pack here and restrapped a hundred-pound sack on my shoulders.

AS I went along I noticed outfits stacked along the trail with "For Sale" signs on them. My shoulder straps cut my back and breathing became more difficult. A half mile beyond Stone House, a fellow had a tarpaper shack. He had a restaurant here and sold good meals. The shack was about 10 by 12 feet. If anyone lugged a good-sized piece of wood up the mountain to him, he got his dinner free.

A little beyond the restaurant was another place of business. It was a snow dugout, or cave. A man served water or lemonade here. Both drinks were the same price, 15c each.

A few feet from the snow house were The Scales. A tarpaper shack housed them. Injuns and others carried packs up The Steps to the summit. They charged 2c a pound and weighed in at The Scales before the big climb.

The big climb! I stared upward for 1,000 feet, and there was a stairway of ice-carved steps all the way. These were The Steps. Injuns had carved them in the dim past, to get up to the summit of Chilkoot and the pass. A white man had charge of them now. A huge rope

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hung down the side of the steps from the summit. It was anchored at the bottom with stakes driven into the ground. A great heap of rocks held the stakes down. The rope was fully an inch thick at the bottom and was used exactly as a stair-rail. Thousands of hands, pulling on the rope, had worn it as thin as a man's finger, at the top. It was anchored here, too, with stakes and rocks. The steps were about one and one-half feet wide.

A money-box was at the bottom of the steps. We dropped 10c or 15c in for the keeper, every time we made a trip to the summit. He kept busy at them all day long, with a shovel and a broom.

I took my place in line. Grabbing the rope with one hand, and digging down with my club, I started up those icy stairs. When I finally came to a resting place, I stopped to get my breath. A resting place was a pair of twin side steps, just large enough to hold a man and his pack.

The summit was rough, but I found a high place and started my cache.

The pass was a gap at the summit. Through this pass, on the other side of the mountain, lay Canadian Territory.

A fellow packed his entire outfit to his cache on the summit. He then slid them down the Canadian side, a sled load at a time. About 1,000 feet below the summit he hit frozen Round Lake. This lake was the first of the chain of lakes and rivers on his route to Dawson and the Klondike.

I WAS watching a fellow riding a canvas down the slide, behind his loaded sled. A mountain of goods was piled at the lake's edge. His sled got away from him, and I saw it plow into that pile of goods. A second later a golden cloud exploded into the air. He had hit someone's cornmeal sack.

I made two trips a day from Sheep Camp to the summit. As I packed, I noticed an outfit with a blame good pocket-knife stuck carelessly into one of the boxes on its top. Thousands passed and repassed that outfit every day, but when I made my final trip, the knife was still there.

I saw things take place at The Steps during that time that were hard to believe. I saw a medium-sized Injun pack a 200-pound barrel of pitch up The Steps. A barrel, or anything round, was the hardest of all loads to carry. They wouldn't fit to a fellow's back. I found that out when I packed my Yukon stove up The Steps. This Injun did it again and again.

Another big fellow from Eugene packed for hire all the time. I've seen him pack four one-hundred-pound sacks of flour up at one time.

But the most amazing thing of all was "the crazy German." That's what I called him in my mind. Impatient to reach the summit, and refusing to take his turn in line, on The Steps, he clawed his way up the rough ice beside the steps. None of us believed he'd make it, but he did.

I learned a quick way to get down the side of Chilkoot, without going the long way back by the Peterson Trail. A slide ran parallel with The Steps. After I'd slid down once, I found out that the seat of a man's pants can feel mighty thin. I used a canvas to ride down on after that.

A little over a week's hard packing, and I had my outfit all cached on the summit. I was really relieved when I boosted my Yukon sled to the top of the pile. It was early April now and the sun blazed down, but a sharp wind was blowing. I felt so good that I made two trips to the summit for hire. The $4.00 that I earned on those trips made me feel better than ever. I could hardly wait to go through the pass. But I'd promised Billy that I'd spend a night with him before I shoved off.

The wind was still blowing and a thin haze was forming over the summit as I turned back. It was snowing when I got back to Sheep Camp.

It was still snowing heavily the next morning, so we decided to stay in camp. I kept thinking about my cache, up on the summit, and wondering how soon I could get back up there. *Delay again! It's what I'd had from the start! Would I never get started?*

About eleven o'clock the snow thinned and the wind died. I'd made up my mind to start right away, when a man came plunging and yelling down the trail.

"Snowslide!" he panted. "A lot are caught in it! Help!" He collapsed on the snow.

I grabbed up one shovel, Billy another, and we joined the hundreds streaming up the trail. We met several survivors. They told us what had happened. Fifty or more of them had been at the summit when a blizzard started up. Afraid, they had started back for Sheep Camp. They all took hold of one guide-rope, as they worked their way down the trail. The avalanche roared down upon them as they rounded a slight curve about a mile beyond The Scales.

BY THE time we had covered the two miles to where the slide blocked the trail, we found hundreds ahead of us, all digging desperately. I saw right away what had happened. This was a straight snowslide, with no rocks or dirt in it. The wet, new snow had piled up on the old crusted snow, and had started sliding. It gathered up more snow as it went along, until there was a slide of 12 to 15 feet deep and 200 to 300 feet wide. It gathered weight and depth as it went along.

I couldn't get in where the rest were digging. But someone told me that there was a smaller slide just off the main trail, between Stone House and The Scales. It was in the location of a worker's camp, so I went there.

I didn't see how anyone could have been caught in this slide. It was only about a hundred yards long and not much wider than across the trail. It wasn't more than ten or twelve feet deep in any place, and it petered out at the trail.

I dug my shovel into the wet snow, and loosened a chunk the size of a bushel basket. Others joined me and we worked frantically. Lifting that wet snow was backbreaking work, and I was sweating

(Continued on following page)

"Why, Sam Brown! You old Flirt!"

THE

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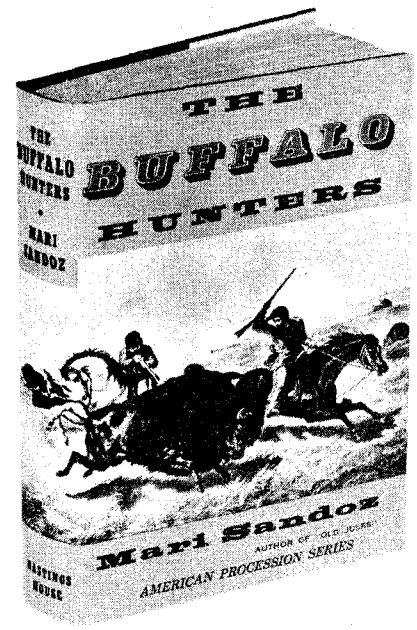
by

Mari Sandoz



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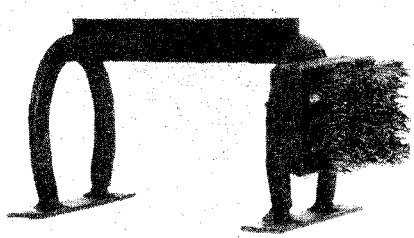

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Haze Over Chilkoot

(Continued from preceding page)

and panting before I'd worked ten minutes. But I kept at it hard as I could. If anyone was under there I wanted him out.

I'd been digging about half an hour, when my shovel slipped down suddenly. I brought it up full of snow, and saw a hole underneath. Another shovelful showed me that I'd struck a hollow in the snow. Underneath the vault-like hollow was a body.

The body of a man lying in a sleeping bag. The hollow was caused by the warmth of his body melting the snow. One look at his face jarred me to a standstill, my shovel rigid in my hands. It was congested. Almost black.

Others were finding victims, too. They uncovered two more bodies. Both were lying in bed. Each body with its vault-like hollow above it. Each face congested.

Silently, feverishly, we worked.

Then we found *him*. The sole survivor of that tiny worker's camp of four. We uncovered the ox.

We found him, chewing away at the baled hay that had saved his life. Those piled-up bales had made a little margin of safety. So slight it was that one of the dead men's feet was touching the hind foot of the ox.

I stared at the chewing animal, hardly believing my eyes. In the week or more that I'd been packing up the trail I hadn't even heard of an ox.

Satisfying ourselves that there were no more victims here, we went back to the big slide. Victims were being uncovered here, too. The guide-rope aided the searchers in their task. They had only to locate it, dig down, and uncover a victim.

I HAD no idea that a doctor was going into Dawson with us until I found him busy at the slide. His name was Dr. Cleveland. He gave first aid to anyone brought up alive. He had the living taken up to the powerhouse. This was a tarpaper shack put up by the tram company at the summit, but neither tramway nor house was finished. All of the survivors were in bad shape. I don't know how many of them died.

The dead were taken down to Sheep Camp. A tent was set up as a morgue and the stiffened bodies were placed in it. At last fifty-three lay there.

Then came the task of trying to identify those congested faces. Dr. Cleveland took charge of the identification. As soon as a man was identified, the doctor made out a report to be sent to his relatives in the States.

One woman was caught in the avalanche. She was buried upright but was still alive when she was taken out. Her condition was bad, and she was rushed up to the powerhouse. She was the woman traveling with two husbands.

Those that escaped, at the end of the rope, told how she was caught in the slide. She was on the very end of the rope when they started down the trail. But she became worried over her husbands, who were farther up, and had started up the rope to catch them. She hadn't caught up with them when I went over the pass. They were both taken out dead.

We dug for three days and were finally satisfied that there was no one else under the snow. Those taken out alive told a curious thing. They said they could hear us running over them, could hear our voices and our shovels, but found it hard to shout for help.

I began sledding my outfit through The Pass and down to Round Lake. We had the trail opened, and everyone was wild to be on his way. The dead had only to wait. The ice waited for no man.

They were holding an auction, on the summit, the day I went up there for the last time. An auction of the slide-victims' goods. Someone told me that the proceeds were to be sent back to the men's families.

I stood there, watching the bidding. "Outfit—J. M. B. What am I bid for this one?" The auctioneer's voice sing-songed. There was no laughter among the bidders. No joking. Each of us were thinking of the men who had gotten these outfits together. They had struggled up Chilkoot, only to be defeated in the end. We thought of their loved ones, waiting back in the States. *Waiting for the men who might have been us!*

"Twenty-five! Who'll make it fifty?"

I turned and stared in the direction of Sheep Camp. I couldn't see the tent of the dead from here, but I knew where it was. Its occupants were still unburied, unmindful of our rushing by. Then I wondered how many of us would reach the Klondike with its golden promise.

Footsteps crunched past me, hurrying through the pass. I glanced up. It was the Negro party. For a moment, before they went through the pass, the sun flamed on a Negro's red hair. I had no way of knowing then that Death waited for him at White Horse Rapids, or that I was never to know the fate of the other two.

"Going—going—gone!" The auctioneer was hurrying now. I glanced up at the sky. It was clear and blue. Perhaps if we had known about the old Injun warning I wouldn't be hearing his sing-song now.

When the wind blows and haze gathers over Chilkoot, there's danger ahead. Stay away from the summit.

That was their warning, but we'd learned it too late.

I threw myself down on my canvas and clutched the sled-runners. Then I shoved off. Five hundred miles away, the Klondike beckoned.

Spirit Curse of the Lost Frenchman's Gold!

(Continued from page 15)

All that day the young Frenchman kept pressing on, without food or rest. Nor did he stop when dusk fell and stars came out. All night he kept doggedly plodding into strange country, hoping to put safe distance behind him. Sometimes he walked, in order to give his tough little burro a breathing spell.

Gray dawn found him on a steep mountain hogback, ravenously hungry and dog tired. Lou noticed then that it was a good spot to make a halt. From this vantage point he could see for several miles over his back trail to the south and to the east. He could be moving again should he see anybody on the prowl.

As sunlight broke over the mountains, Lou made camp in a grove of trees "with light-colored bark," which he took to be live oaks. He ate snacks of food that had happened to be tied in a flour sack behind his saddle. He put Katinka out on a picket rope.

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Finally Lou sat down on a ragged outcropping and tried to relax. The sun was warming his tired, sore body when he idly picked up a rock, intending to toss it at a scurring, slithering form that he took to be a lizard.

The rock proved to be so heavy in weight that he dropped his eyes, then stared. In his hand was a piece of whitish, semi-transparent quartz, thinly threaded with glistening wire gold. Lou had seen samples of ore that prospectors had proudly displayed in various camps, but never before had he seen quartz so amazingly rich in precious metal. He jumped to his feet and looked around him. The ground under the trees and off down the slope to the southeast was now glinting and shimmering in the sun. It was all this same kind of broken up, beautifully gold-veined rock!

It was positively amazing! Why, with a hammer to crush the rock, here was a fortune for the taking! No panning or placering! It would lift out like yellow lace! *And it was all his!*

Lou Belfils suddenly whooped for joy and ran toward his faithful little companion. Katinka snorted and backed away. Then Lou went mute and stopped dead, staring over the animal's back and down the slope.

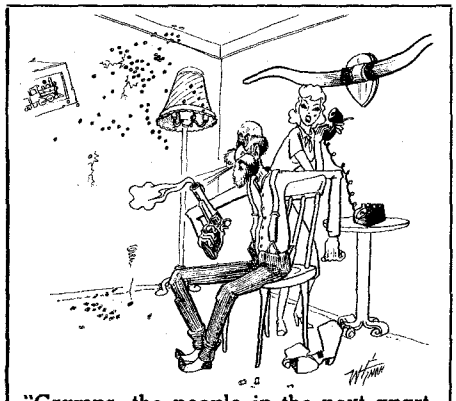
The Indians had circled to the east! Down in a tree-shaded meadow they were now moving cautiously in timber shadows! Moving in his direction!

STARK fear made Lou leap for his burro. He tore up the branch peg, grabbed the rope and jumped into the saddle that he had not taken off. In a matter of seconds Katinka was again in a choppy, short-legged lope, evidently sensing the urgent drive of her master.

All that day Lou rode wildly through more rough country. Late in the afternoon he reached Fiddler's Gulch, then circled Eight Dollar Mountain on a well-worn trail. He literally wept with joy when he saw the outskirts of the mining camp, Selma.

Here Lou Belfils let down and rested from his ordeal. He treated Katinka to the best hay and grain obtainable. He repaired watches and kept his precious secret. At night, in the privacy of his room, he unwrapped his chunk of gold-bearing quartz, fingered it fondly and wondered just what he should do about his good fortune.

Days passed into weeks. One Saturday afternoon Lou learned that on the following Monday a group of miners were leaving for—of all places—his home town, Jackson City! When they left Selma, Lou Belfils was with them.



"Gramps, the people in the next apartment are complaining about you killing flies again."

As soon as Lou reached Jackson City he looked up C. C. Beekman, a pony express rider who later became a banker. After securing Beekman's promise of secrecy, Lou Belfils poured out his story. He produced the piece of quartz that he had stuck inside his shirt and asked its value. Beekman whistled. He bought the piece of quartz for $100 and promptly offered to grubstake Lou if he would give him a half interest in the claim.

Lou Belfils readily agreed to this, for he liked this frank young fellow. Lou's confidence was not misplaced. Beekman proved to be a man of his word and highly dependable. He knew local conditions very well and advised Lou to wait for a few months before starting out again. Soon the Indians' antagonism would be smoothed out and they would be put on reservations.

Beekman's opinion in this proved correct. Soon it appeared safe for young Lou to start back and stake out claims for himself and his new partner.

Equipped with plenty of grub, two good mules besides Katinka, camping equipment, rifle, ammunition and good stout mountain clothes that Beekman supplied, Lou Belfils set out.

FIGURING that the best way was to retrace his journey to Fort Dick and back, he returned to Sailor's Diggings—Waldo. He made the trip over the Siskiyous to Fort Dick without incident. He started north and east along the same government trail that he had taken before. He reached the spot where he had been ambushed, now almost a year later. It all looked the same. This was going to be easy.

Then he started to follow the trail to where his burros had raced instinctively for safety. He was treading his way through stunted cedars when he heard a voice. It seemed to be close to his shoulder. It had a mannish ring to it yet it sounded very soft, no doubt meaning to be kind.

"Don't look for the gold!" it said. "Don't look for any gold! Don't go there!"

Lou Belfils looked around warily. There was no one behind shrubbery or up a tree. He wondered then if he had really heard a voice.

For weeks he searched the northerly slope, went back over the serrated ridges. He circled, and overlapped his circles. He ranged north and south, then east and west. He went down to Sailor's Diggings for more supplies, then continued his search. It was no go. He couldn't find that ledge of gold-bearing quartz.

But he knew that it was there—somewhere. He kept on looking, doggedly now. Heat came with full summer, then the chill and bleakness of autumn. Soon cottony, white flakes of snow began drifting down. When the wind made heavy banks of it, made it impossible to flounder along, Lou Belfils gave up the search. But only for a little while. Only for the winter.

The next spring Lou was out again, as soon as the snow melted a little. All that year he looked for the ridge ledge near the live oaks. He kept looking the year after that. He knew the fabulous quartz was somewhere on an eastern slope of the mountains, for the morning sun had shone on the glittering wire gold.

Miners in the various settlements began talking about the Frenchman who

(Continued on following page)

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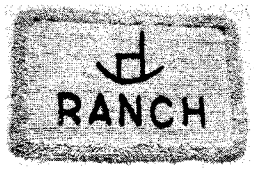

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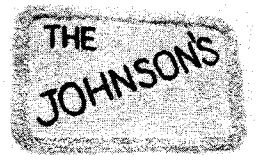

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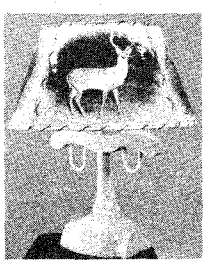

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Spirit Curse of the Lost Frenchman's Gold!

(Continued from preceding page)

had been born near Paris but who kept searching for new gold in a new country.

Year after year went by. Because Lou Belfils wasn't getting any nearer to his hoped-for fortune as he grew older, he kept repairing watches and mending jewelry. He married a fine woman and had several sturdy children. After leaving Jackson City he lived in Roseburg, Oregon, and Tulare, California, among other places, where he made ends meet with his jewelry business.

Whenever he could take time away from his family duties he made trip after trip into the Siskiyous Mountains, ever hopeful that he would find his treasured hoard.

NEVER did he give up hope that sometime he would be successful. He saw prospector after prospector go out, ahead of and behind him, looking for the same rich spot. He was getting old now. Not much longer could he tackle the hard trail that tired even the best of young men.

As John Belfils—later to become a dentist in Eureka—developed into young manhood, the elder Belfils told him everything he could about the "Lost Frenchman's Mine," as it was called around settlement campfires. When Louis died in 1900 at Grants Pass, Oregon, at the age of 69, the young son remembered.

When John was 18 years old he took up the quest in person. For over a year he searched diligently by himself, following his father's explicit directions. He traced out Lou's route, branched into Onion Valley and heard the screams of cougars by night. He shied away from rattlesnakes, saw piles of rocks here and there, already overgrown with brush, where prospectors had searched for gold.

Trying a new angle, young John then started at Kerby and back-tracked on the trail. This got nowhere either. He stopped looking for a while when he became sick with kidney trouble, after drinking water that seeped from greenish-blue serpentine rock, found all through this locality. A lot of miners suffered with this trouble, out in the hills.

Some time later young Belfils took up the search again. With Sam LaHeist, a brother-in-law who had come west from Kentucky, he left Grants Pass early one morning for Kerby.

The Belfils party outfitted at the Burks Mercantile Store. As soon as local prospectors learned that Lou's son was in Kerby and "on the prod," there was a stampede for the hills. Two old prospectors were especially "stake crazy." They kept staking out claims ahead of the Belfils party, hopeful that, if there happened to be a find, they would come in for a share. For months this went on until the old boys were literally worn down to ventilated socks and hobnails.

Young Belfils returned to Grants Pass, then went on to Jacksonville. Believing he should make an effort at a more tangible income, he went to Portland to study dentistry at the North Pacific College, now affiliated with the University of Oregon. He entered practice in 1910, opening an office in Eureka.

Some months ago, before he passed away, Doctor Belfils smiled and shook his head when asked if he was ever going to search again for the "Lost Frenchman's Gold," to try and vindicate the elder Belfils' claim.

"No, I'm not," he said with a trace of regret in his soft voice. "Like my father, I can't go hiking the hills indefinitely. One gets older, you know. Besides I've got to make a living too. I'm dealing with gold as it is, only it's in crowns and fillings and a much surer thing.

"Maybe," he went on pensively, "there *was* something to that warning spirit voice after all. Dad often talked about it. It could be that a curse had been placed on the gold-bearing quartz. Maybe the ground slid, undermined by a spring freshet. Personally, I wouldn't know. After all I'm only a city dweller at heart."

Nineteen Months with the Comanches

(Continued from page 25)

they also approved her trait of showing mercy to a fallen foe. They named her "The Fighting Squaw."

But the fight with the younger woman led to a second and more serious encounter with the old mistress of the lodge. First ordering Rachel to bring in some hay, the spiteful old crone tried to tie her hands. Fearing treachery, Rachel resisted. The squaw then set fire to the hay and threw the blazing bundle on her. Painfully burned, Rachel grabbed her tormenter and held her close to the flaming grass. The wiry old woman fought furiously, and before the fight was over the old mistress was beaten almost into unconsciousness and the lodge was a shambles.

This was the second mistress that Rachel had subdued, and each had lost much face with the tribe. Again Rachel administered to the bruises of her defeated opponent.

But now Rachel was forced to stand trial in the Council House. The chief and twelve of the tribe's head men presided. After Rachel had been seated, the chief rose, raised his right hand, and beckoned her two mistresses to rise.

"Is it true that each of you has fought The Fighting Squaw?" he asked.

"It is true," they answered.

"Are all the facts true that we have discussed here?" went on the chief.

"Yes," they replied.

"Do either of you have anything further to say?"

"No," they answered.

"Then you are dismissed," concluded the chief.

Then came Rachel's turn to take the stand. The same preliminary questions were asked of her. She answered them, waiting tensely for the final question.

"Do you have anything to say before the Council passes sentence?" asked the chief.

"Yes, I have plenty to say!" she cried.

"Then speak!" the chief sternly bade her.

Rachel Plummer, in a cool, dignified manner, made her speech.

"I am going to tell you honorable men the truth if you kill me for it. My people had done nothing to the Comanches. We were living a quiet, peaceful life disturbing no one. We were close to your hunting grounds; perhaps that is why you attacked us.

"You took me dishonorably. You used the white flag of truce to trick me and my friends into death or slavery. You have killed my children.

"I have been with you many months,

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doing everything you asked of me. I have done slave labor because I was afraid you would kill me if I refused. But now—from this very minute—I will show you that I am not afraid of death. I await your sentence, but I warn you that the Great Spirit will punish you for the great harm you have done to me and my people."

RACHEL sat down, hardly caring what the judges' decision would be. The head men pow-wowed briefly with the chief, and then the chief rose to speak.

"You—who show mercy on fallen foes—are part of the Great Spirit. We admire you, for no Indian shows mercy like you do. You are now one of us, for anyone with courage and mercy can be Comanche."

The chief paused, then said solemnly, "I sentence you to go out and cut another tent pole to replace the one you tore down."

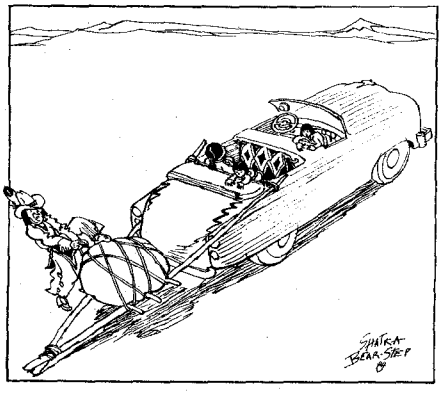
Almost fainting with relief, Rachel accepted her punishment provided that the mistresses helped her with the job. The judges agreed to The Fighting Squaw's request. From that time on, The Fighting Squaw was a respected personage in the tribe.

Though she had established herself with the Comanches, Rachel Plummer could never be reconciled to their ruthless, nomadic way of life. She had been on the move with them for nearly nineteen months. All that time she had worked like a slave, for the women were obliged to do all the heavy work of the camp. No woman could sit in the tribal councils, nor could she ask anything about the proceedings of the council. She was never told when or where the tribe was going to move.

A woman was bound with innumerable taboos. She could not broil and boil meat on the same fire. She could lose nothing or waste nothing in the preparation of the buffalo for food. She was forbidden to walk close enough to the fire to cast her shadow, as that would produce a dread spell of evil for the whole camp.

When one member of her lodge became sick, the shaman, or medicine man, appeared on the scene. In an opening between two lodges, the shaman started his weird incantations. He dug a hole under each tepee. In one hole he built a fire, while in the other he placed an exact mud replica of the patient's head. He then stuck willow twigs all about the two holes.

At sunrise the strange healing rites began. With solemn ceremony, the shaman led the patient into his makeshift hospital. Musicians accompanied the procession with weird music. The drums beat all day. No one was allowed to walk close enough to the fire to cast a shadow, for if this happened the sick man was doomed. If the patient died, the shaman conveniently laid the blame on unseen forces that had ruined his magical incantations. If he recovered, the shaman could collect a fee from the grateful relatives. Either way he couldn't lose.



Always curious, Rachel Plummer made many inquiries about the shamans. She learned that some of them pledged their life's work to becoming a medicine man. He would go through one of the medicine lodges, which granted three or four degrees. Each degree cost the student a large amount in barter, and the farther he advanced in these secret meetings, the more each successive degree cost. At times a shaman had to pledge his life's savings in order to achieve the highest degree.

War chiefs and some other leaders usually inherited their positions within the tribe, but there were cases where some outstanding personal achievement helped to win a brave some coveted position. This was a way of rewarding those who possessed special skills, abilities or knowledge. Thus Rachel Plummer became "The Fighting Squaw" because of the prowess she displayed in the fights with her two mistresses.

When a comrade fell in battle, the Comanches shed no tears over him. If a slain warrior was scalped, however, his whole village swore vengeance.

ONE day a war party of Osage warriors attacked Rachel's camp. A few of the fallen Comanches were scalped. After the enemy had been driven off, the Comanches scalped the dead Osages, cut their bodies up, and held a cannibalistic feast. Rachel's young mistress offered her a roasted human foot, but the captive politely declined the choice tidbit.

Some time later, at a camping point somewhere west of the Rockies, a party of Mexican traders came into the Comanche village. They spotted the white woman at once and began negotiations with her master for her release. After much bickering, Rachel heard the old man agree to release her for a stipulated sum.

Rachel and the Mexican traders spent seventeen days on the trail before they reached Santa Fe, New Mexico. At the post there, she was turned over to a Mr. Donaho, who had been working for her release ever since her capture. The people about the post collected $150.00 to send her back to her people in Texas, but for some unknown reason the pastor of the village church refused to give her the money. She then decided to accompany Mr. Donaho on his return trip to his home in Independence.

Mrs. Plummer was met at Independence by her brother-in-law, Mr. Nixon, who told her about the ones lost and the ones saved on that memorable day of the attack on Fort Parker. In return, Rachel told of her own harsh experiences and the fate of her children. She could tell Mr. Nixon nothing of the whereabouts of Cynthia Ann and John Parker.

Rachel rode horseback from Independence, Missouri, to Texas. She found that her people had moved farther south in Texas to Montgomery County. They welcomed her joyfully and listened with rapt attention to her story of the nineteen hard months she had endured with the Comanches. Dry-eyed, she told of

(Continued on following page)

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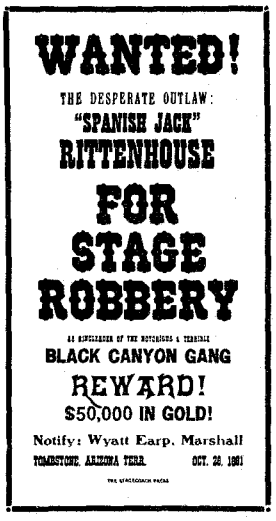

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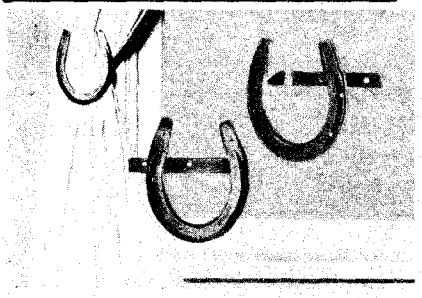

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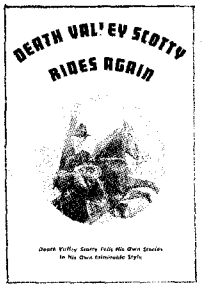

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Nineteen Months with the Comanches

(Continued from preceding page)

the tragic death of her second son and the disappearance of her little Jimmy. Her relatives were weeping when she finished speaking.

The experiences of Rachel's cousin, Cynthia Ann Parker, were quite different. Captured at the same time as Rachel when she was only nine years old, Cynthia Ann lived with the Comanches for twenty-eight years and married Chief Pete Nocona. The last fourteen years of her life were spent with her uncle and brother-in-law, Mr. O'Quinn. Her small daughter, Prairie Flower, was buried near Edom, Texas, but her son, Quanah, became a chief of the Comanches. Cynthia Ann was buried in 1874, a few miles south of Poynor, Texas, in the Foster cemetery. Quanah removed her bones in the early 1900's to the Indian burial ground in Oklahoma.

Cynthia Ann's brother, John Parker, was released before he was grown, to become a substantial citizen in West Texas.

James Pratt Plummer was never seen again by his mother after his disappearance in the Comanche camp, but the Indians released him when he was thirteen years old. He became a good citizen and lived with white people for the rest of his life.

Rachel Plummer, health impaired by her long ordeal, did not live long after her liberation from the Comanches. She died on the nineteenth of February, 1839, one year after she reached home. She lies buried in Montgomery County.

Renegade Battalion

(Continued from page 23)

they kept running until they were shut up like rats in a trap in the fortified city of Monterrey, ringed with stone walls, crowned with stout stone citadels, surrounded by a moat. Even the houses of Monterrey, street after street of them, were made of stone and hardened adobe—each, in itself, a small citadel. Here the Mexicans halted their headlong retreat, and defied the Americans to come get them.

The Americans came, crossing the moat under murderous fire, swarming up the supposedly impregnable volcanic slopes, hurling themselves against the smoke-wreathed citadels. Many a man in light blue fell that day—but the moat, the citadels and the Mexican army fell also.

Now the victorious Americans rushed into the city on the great slope from every direction. Charging in the front rank came the 7th, which had been besieged in Fort Brown, and from which some men had deserted. The soldiers of the 7th knew that the deserters had been formed into a battalion. They knew that the battalion was here, in Monterrey; and every mother's son who had worn the blue and now wielded a Mexican lance or musket was a marked man. With an eerie, soul-curdling cry the eager avengers of the 7th poured on—a cry that started in a rumble and ended in a scream—the war cry of the Indian warrior mingled with the rangers' cattle call; a cry swelling in volume and ending in what was to become known and feared as the weird Rebel Yell.

The Americans streamed on into the narrow streets, bayoneting the enemy as they advanced, climbing to the flat rooftops to dislodge the Mexicans who had taken refuge inside the houses of stone and adobe. The refuge failed; one of the American engineers, who would later be known as the Federal General Meade and the victor of Gettysburg, had shown the men how to toss hand grenades into the apertures and breach the stone walls. Leaping through the holes blasted in the walls by the grenades, the Americans were on their foes like hungry tigers...

Out of a shattered house came a dark, pretty girl, with a bright scarf about her head, carrying a loaf of bread and a gourd of water. She went from one fallen man to another, no matter what uniform he wore, moistening his lips with water, giving him a bite of bread, wiping his grimy face with a fold of her silken scarf.

Suddenly a rifle cracked out sharply; the girl toppled over into the dust without a moan, the water trickling from her broken gourd, in her hand still a crust of bread. There was firing all about, and there could hardly be any doubt it was an accident, yet it took the fine edge off the victory for the Americans who witnessed the heroism of this angel of mercy.

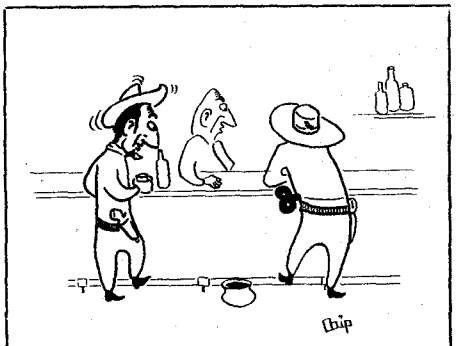
That evening the great plaza in the center of the town was shaded by American cannon trained across it from every angle. Instead of the glitteringly appareled Mexicans who formerly gathered there to ogle and flirt with the *senoritas* of the town, American horsemen sat their mounts stolidly on guard.

When day dawned, the guns were withdrawn and the horsemen joined comrades to form a hollow square in the plaza. The ragged and the red-velveted Mexican prisoners stacked their arms. The Mexican tri-color came down from its standard, and in its stead went up the red, white and blue banner of the Americans to a rousing cheer of victory.

IN the blazing sun on the crag, the Americans carried out a Christian burial for the girl who lay beside the broken gourd. In the days that followed, the Americans joined Mexican girls at feasts and fandangoes, and the dark-eyed *senoritas* learned that the tall *Americanos* were not barbarians after all.

But every day, in the plaza, a firing squad exacted the ultimate retribution from the men who had sworn to fight for the flag now flying over the enemy in victory, and who had sold out for the never-realized reward of 320 acres of Mexican land.

When the last grim volley sounded, the Renegade Battalion became but a bitter memory in the nation's history.



"What's yours, sidewinder?"

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WESTERN BOOK ROUNDUP

By The Old Bookaroos

MOUNTAIN MEN

FUR HUNTERS OF THE NORTHWEST (University of Oklahoma Press, $5) by Alexander Ross, edited by Kenneth A. Spaulding, covers the opening up of a new country when fur trading companies sent their trappers, the first of the mountain men, into the tributaries of the Columbia to trap for beaver and other pelferies. These nervy men battled against vicious odds imposed by weather, topography and warring savages, but they got furs and explored what has become our great Northwest.

The Northwest fur trade was in its heyday between 1810 and 1825 and declined thereafter. Between the covers of this book is found a first hand account of this eventful era by Alexander Ross, a Scot and one of the intrepid mountain men, who ram-rodded numerous trapping expeditions throughout the Columbia River Basin. Fortunately, Ross left journals giving his on-the-ground experiences of this rugged period. He worked successively for Astor, Northwest Company and Hudson's Bay Company.

The Ross Journals were published in England in 1855 but were edited in the style of that time and much of the vigor of his account was lost in the editing. The present book presents the original version.

The material is choice but slow reading in spots; however, the reader is well rewarded if he stays with it. The last one-third has amazing detail about the Snake River fur trapping expedition headed by Ross. There's much about that courageous genius, Donald McKenzie, who is a central figure and hero in this book. There are several excellent illustrations by such famous artists as Miller, Warre and Bodmer.

HOMESTEADING

George C. Bailey's TALL TREES SURROUND US (Caxton, $4) is dated 1955 but was actually released in January 1956. It is the true story of homesteading on the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation in northern Idaho in 1910-12. It is an interesting, homely narrative of cabin building, hunting and skimping to prove up the entry. The photographs made durng the years on the claim highlight the book.

COLLECTORS' SPECIALS

The days following Christmas are historically a little slow in the publishing game so it seems appropriate to call attention to some of the privately printed and regional press items that are sure to be eagerly sought by collectors in the days to come.

BILLY THE KID

Ruth R. Ealy's WATER IN A THIRSTY LAND (privately printed, $10) is a compilation of the diaries, notes, and letters of her father with some contributions by her mother. Dr. Ealy was a medical missionary and teacher in Indian Territory and in New Mexico in the late eighteen seventies for the Presbyterian Church. After a brief period at Fort Arbuckle, I. T., he was assigned to Lincoln, New Mexico. With his family, he arrived at Lincoln on February 19, 1878 the very day Tunstall was murdered. His first official act was to preside at the Tunstall funeral on February 21.

His diary and letters are full of the Lincoln County War up through the three-day battle in mid-July — the wounded he attended, the funeral services performed, his relations with Col. Dudley, and his observations on the causes and the action. The last half of the book covers the services of the Ealys at Zuni Pueblo and will be of much interest to students of Indian customs.

The edition is extremely small as the book was prepared primarily for the family and friends. It is a must for the Billy the Kid and outlaw collectors as the most important addition in years to the knowledge of the doings at Lincoln.

RANGE LIFE

ECHOES OF THE PAST: TALES OF OLD YAVAPAI IN ARIZONA (privately printed by the Yavapai Cow Belles, $3) as edited Learah Cooper Morgan, is a book of much charm. These sprightly memoirs of the pioneers of Yavapai County reveal much on the early range life around Prescott. Well printed and well bound, with a wealth of good illustrations, it is thoroughly "pro" job of book making. Highly recommended to all range life collectors.

Donald H. Welsh's PIERRE WIBAUX, CATTLE KING (reprinted from NORTH DAKOTA HISTORY, $1) is a short scholarly biography of one of the French ranchers on the Montana-North Dakota border. Wibaux was an astute operator and he ended up as a cow country banker at Miles City. The reprint is limited to 300 copies.

WESTERN ART

WESTWARD THE WAY (City Art Museum of St. Louis, $3.95) edited by Perty T. Rathbone is an excellent book on the character and development of the Louisiana Territory as seen by the artists and writers of the nineteenth century. There are 225 illustrations, 4 in full color, on pioneering in the Territory. The artists represented include Frederic Remington, Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, Wimar, Bodmer, Seth Eastman, Audubon, Miller, and George Caleb Bingham. The text, skillfully selected by editor Rathbone to match the illustrations, is from the pens of such illustrious writers as Washington Irving, Mark Twain, Audubon and General George Custer. This is a **high spot** in the history of the art of the West. Worth twice the cost.

LOCAL HISTORY

Minnie Dubbs Millbrook's NESS, WESTERN COUNTY, KANSAS (privately printed, $5.50) is one of the best county histories of a dozen years. This is a big handsome, well illustrated (150 pictures and maps) book with much on pioneer life and the early farms and ranches of Ness County. The edition is small and as an extra dividend there is a drawing by Frederic Remington. A must for collectors of local history, range life and, of course, Remington.

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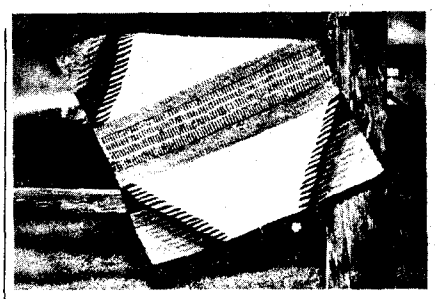

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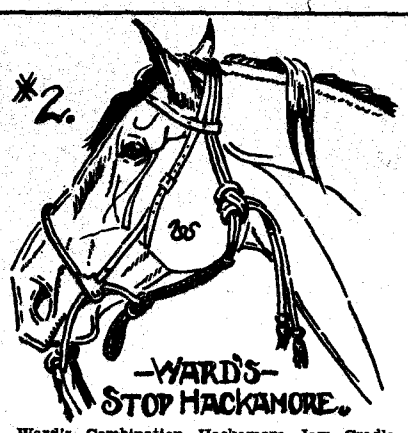

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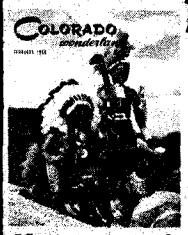

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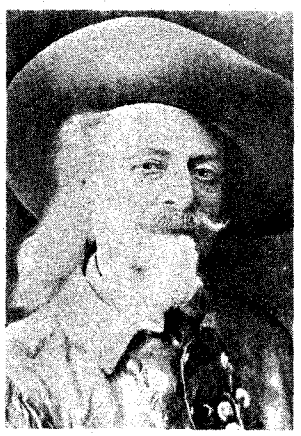

Buffalo Bill Cody, later a famous showman with his own Wild West Show, won his title as a meat hunter for a railroad camp.

Jim Bridger, old-time mountain man, scout and guide, deplored the senseless slaughter of the buffalo herds.

Bill Tilghman, who was to become a famous U.S. Marshal and serve as a law officer for 50 years, once killed 3,300 buffalo in six months.

World's Greatest Slaughter

(Continued from page 9)

"From that month the wild American bison was practically a thing of the past. The barbarous brutality practiced in the final slaughter is almost beyond belief. The hunters kept fires blazing all night along the river banks and guarded every water-hole, knowing that sooner or later the thirst-tortured creatures would be driven in a desperate effort to slake their thirst, to face the deadly rifles of the hunters, which ceased (firing) only when there was nothing more to shoot. Such a merciless war of extermination was never before witnessed in a civilized land."

THE guns stopped booming, the great bison herds were no more. Now all that was left of the buffalo population was the bleaching bones of their carcasses strewn across the Plains. The rolling prairie was white with their huge skulls and skeletons. The bones could be used back East in fertilizer and carbon works, so now came the bone hunters with their wagons. One hundred bison skeletons furnished enough bones to make a ton, worth about ten dollars. Yet the bone harvest was so plentiful that fortunes were made from it. One hunter alone, known only as "Old Buffalo Bones," shipped 3,000 carloads out of Dodge City in two years and made enough money to retire on. The Santa Fe hauled 1,350,000 pounds of bones in three years. It is estimated that bone buyers paid out $2,500,000 for bones over a thirteen-year period in Kansas, at prices of six dollars or less a ton.

Garretson, from whom we get a vivid and accurate picture of those times, writes: "At every way station, side track or switch for 150 miles, monster piles of bones were stacked like cordwood. Many of these stacks were eight or ten feet high and more than half a mile long."

With all the former hide hunters in the country gathering bones, as well as everybody else who could get hold of a horse, ox or mule and a wagon, it wasn't long before the bones too were gone. Now all that remained of the buffalo were his old wallows marking the prairie, and the bare circles called "fairy rings," where, in days past, the great bulls had worn away the grass protecting the calving cows against wolves in their constant watchful patrolling.

Hides gone, bones gone! The fact was monstrous, staggering, shocking—but there it was. Baldly and simply, the buffalo had been mercilessly slaughtered to the verge of actual extinction in the most horrifying mass demonstration of stupidity and avarice the world has ever known. The Government, following the lead of General Sheridan, had refused to provide last-minute protection for the mighty beasts, and so the grim result was inevitable. True, the Indians were starved into subjection by the national catastrophe—but at what a terrible price! Nothing in the history of wildlife has ever approached in bloody magnitude the Great American Buffalo Slaughter.

DOCTOR WILLIAM T. HORNADAY, of the New York Zoological Society, made a painstaking count of the few remaining buffaloes in 1889 and announced that only 541 buffaloes remained alive in the United States. These survivors were in zoos, private refuges and in Yellowstone Park. Hornaday suggested that the Government establish national herds to preserve this remnant of the vast herds, but Washington officials dallied, doing nothing. By 1893, poachers had killed all but twenty of the Yellowstone Park buffaloes.

Stung into action by the mounting public outcry, President Cleveland signed a bill making buffalo hunting illegal in Yellowstone Park and providing severe punishment for convicted offenders. The poachers merely shifted operations to other parts of the West where a few bison still lingered in remote areas. In Lost Park, Colorado, in 1897, two bulls, a cow and a calf were shot—last specimens of the original wild stock that once had roamed the land millions strong.

Now, with only a few buffaloes in captivity as a nucleus from which to build a national herd, great efforts were made to save the species. For the first time, scientists, sportsmen and wildlife experts found a unitedly sympathetic audience. With the "hostile redskins" cowed and broken, safely tucked away on reservations, public sentiment had changed and now the cry was "Save the buffalo!" In 1902, Colonel Charles J. "Buffalo" Jones was made warden in Yellowstone Park. Jones promptly bought twenty-one buffaloes from the Pablo-Allard and Charles Goodnight private herds. The start toward regenera-

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tion of the bison was a tiny one, but it was a beginning.

In 1905, President Theodore Roosevelt issued a proclamation creating a Game Preserve of 61,500 acres of forest and plain on the former Kiowa-Comanche Reservation in southwestern Oklahoma. Doctor Hornaday at once proposed that the Zoological Society offer the Federal authorities a nucleus herd of pure-bred American bison, providing Congress would appropriate a sum of money "sufficient to erect a fence around a considerable area of grazing grounds in the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve, and provide for the maintenance of the herd."

The Zoological Society heartily approved Doctor Hornaday's suggestion, and the Government accepted the offer with the President's enthusiastic endorsement. It took Congress a year to get around to appropriating $15,000 for fence enough to enclose 8,000 acres of the Preserve, and another year for the fence to be built. The enclosure was stocked with fifteen carefully selected buffaloes—six males and nine females, of various ages—from the Bronx Zoo. Given scientific care and protection, the small group multiplied until, in 1951, more than 700 buffaloes resulted.

The American Bison Society, formed in 1905 with Theodore Roosevelt as Honorary President, and Doctor Hornaday as President, established the Montana Bison Range on what was formerly the Flathead Indian Reservation. In later years, the Society was chiefly responsible for creating the Wind Cave herd in South Dakota and the Pisgah Game Preserve herd in North Carolina.

With these powerful friends and protectors, the buffalo rallied to return from the very brink of total extermination. In 1951, the Caribou Press at Bronxville, New York, conducted a bison census based on individual signed postcard returns from every known bison station in the world. This survey disclosed that there were, at that time, 9,252 buffaloes in the United States, including animals held in the four national herds and in the national parks. The Alaskan herd, established in 1928 with twenty-four buffaloes, now numbers more than 400. At present, it is probable that the grand total of American buffaloes is slightly in excess of 10,000.

Ten thousand left where once roamed upwards of sixty millions!

By such a narrow margin has the American Bison escaped extinction.

Buckingest Bronc

(Continued from page 21)

His technique was something like this: at about the third jump he'd bog his head between his forelegs and kick off the lid. When he had the rider straining back against the taut rein he'd heave up his head violently, leaving the rein slack and the buckaroo without its support. Then he'd high-roll it for heaven, and when he came down, the rider remained windmilling in midair somewhere this side of the Pearly Gates.

Temperamental Midnight was almost as hard to handle out of the arena as in. It wasn't that he was so poison mean; he was just ornery and stubborn and powerful proud.

He was right easy to lead, if he chanced to be going your way; but if his mind was set on something else, you couldn't budge him with an atom bomb.

(Continued on following page)

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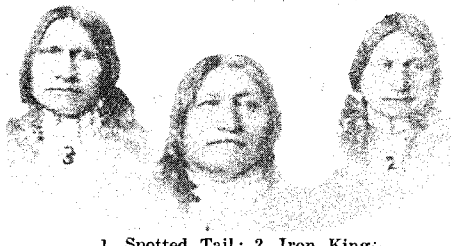
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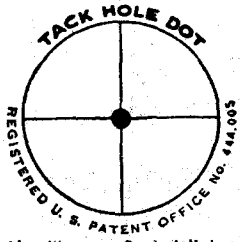

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Buckingest Bronc

(Continued from preceding page)

He'd never rear and slash at you with his hoofs, like some of the bandit broncs in the string, but he had a quaint little habit of sneaking up and biting a chunk out of your shoulder.

Mrs. Elliott was the only human who could handle him without the protection of armor plate. He'd eat oats out of her hand.

Verne swears the big black was gifted with a sense of humor. Sometimes when he'd kettled a rider into the dust he'd prance back, all wall-eyed and snorty, to where the dazed twister lay sunning his boot soles. Twenty thousand faces in the grandstand would go white as it appeared the unloaded rider was about to be trampled to death.

Before the pickup men could gather up the remains, Midnight would nuzzle the defeated foe gently as if saying, "Better luck next time, pardner." Then he'd look up with his shaggy forelock skewballed over one eye at a Will Rogers slant, swiveling his jaws like he was working on a chew of eating tobacco. It was his way of giving the cash customers the horse laugh.

ONCE when he was bucking for the fun of it after pouring off an ambitious waddy, a hind hoof caught momentarily in a flopping stirrup. The cowboy's alibi, "I reckoned to get off when I seen he wanted to get on," was the debut of a gag that, in one form or another, is still going strong.

As a show bucker, Midnight led the pampered life of a Hollywood star. Freed from the toil of ranch life, he worked at his trade about three seconds daily, four times a week during the rodeo season, and in the off months ranged the pasture with his worshipful harem.

Verne and Ed refused to sell him at any price. They are said to have turned down $10,000 for the ace bucker that cost them $250. They carried a $5,000 policy insuring him against accident.

Because of the huge sums that frequently changed hands as the result of Midnight's uncorking, he was guarded as carefully as a prima donna against dirty work at the crossroads. Only once did the fixers penetrate this guard with their deadly needle.

Instead of exploding from the chute with his customary bang, as if he'd swallowed a bellyful of bed springs, the big black staggered weakly, halted with head drooping dizzily between widespread forelegs, and didn't even catback himself. As it was apparent that someone had slipped him a Mickey Finn, the judges called it "no contest" and required the rider to draw another horse out of the hat.

Midnight possessed more boxoffice appeal than any single attraction in the rodeo game. In 1928, Denver's National Western Livestock and Horse Show was facing the prospect of a dismal deficit, so a rodeo was launched as an added attraction, with Midnight playing the lead. He drew turn-away crowds and pulled National Western out of the hole.

Inevitably the wise guys in the grandstands began to sound off that it was impossible for any horse to be such a holy terror as Midnight was cracked up to be. Strictly under the hat, they'd tell you that Cousin Elmer knew somebody that once worked as a rodeo hazer who slipped him a straight tip that all the rodeo contestants who drew Midnight were paid to take a dive, just to help the big black gelding's newspaper buildup.

"The prestige to be won by conquering Midnight far outweighed the lure of any penny ante dive money," says Verne. "Any contestant would have sold his soul for the honor of being known as the man who rode the world's buckingest bronc."

IN 1932 the word was flashed from Pendleton that Fred Studnicka, an Oregon cowhand, had ridden the unconquerable Midnight. Partisans maintain the bronc was "home-towned." Local rules eliminated the customary starting chutes and provided for snubbing the horses to the saddle horn of a hazer while the rider mounted and, it was claimed, gave the starting judge too much discretion.

When Midnight's blindfold was jerked off, they say he was whipped across the eyes with it, startling him so he sat down for three seconds before beginning to buck. As these partisans describe the ride, the rider left the saddle, as was customary with Midnight, at the third jump.

"The timing judge fired his pistol when he saw Studnicka sailing into the air," Verne insists. "No one can convince me it took Midnight seven seconds to make those three pitches. Ed and I publicly offered to bet $10,000 Studnicka couldn't stick to Midnight under standard rodeo rules. The bet was never taken up."

But age was creeping up on the big black. He had developed ringbone from a bruise, causing soreness in his forelegs. Verne and Ed decided to have him shod, but it was like trying to slap a branding iron on a meteor. The horseshoer slung iron at everything that flew past and actually succeeded in getting a shoe on the off fore hoof before he cheated the undertaker by quitting.

Under standard rodeo rules a rider is disqualified if he loses a stirrup.

Says Verne, "They changed this rule at the Fort Worth show in 1933, so that blowing a stirrup meant only the loss of twenty points instead of disqualification. Floyd Stillings lost a stirrup but stayed with the sorefooted Midnight for the required ten seconds. Despite the Studnicka and Stillings rides, we claim Midnight was never ridden under standard rodeo rules."

Age caused the old campaigner's teeth to cup so he no longer could masticate his food thoroughly. They tried to "float" his teeth by filing the cups level, but they might as well have tried to file the teeth of a whirring buzz saw. They announced that Midnight would be retired after the 1933 Cheyenne show. He made his last competition rides and retired in

"Believe me, I ain't riding this character on the way back!"

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an aureola of dust and glory by unloading Bob Askins and Turk Greenough, topnotchers among rodeo riders.

The following year he was taken to London, where he made his last public appearance in four exhibition rides at Wimbledon.

A sigh of relief went up from contestants when Midnight retired, but there were sighs of another nature. They had cussed the big black all around the arena, but it was the pet-name cussing a cowboy reserves for his favorite horse.

THE cowboy loves a tough and gallant foe. Midnight had earned the respect of the men who had been his bitter arena enemies, for he never knew how to quit.

When the boys are squatting around the blanket under the grandstand and the crap game palls, many a lengthy argument is chewed over, as to which was the buckingest horse of all time. But sooner or later the argument centers down to the two finalists, old Steamboat and Midnight.

Steamboat was foaled on the Frank Foss ranch in Wyoming in 1894. When he was a four-year-old, Sam Moore, foreman of the Swan Land & Cattle Co., bought him for his outfit, better known in rangeland circles as the Two Bar.

Legend has it that he was broken to the saddle and ridden for a season as a cow horse. But the following spring when he was brought in from the winter range, he was unridable. They called him Steamboat because of a nostril obstruction that caused him to make a snuffling, whistling noise while bucking, somewhat like a steamboat whistle.

The organized rodeo was unknown until the first Cheyenne Frontier Days celebration in 1896, although there were several traveling Wild West shows. The Cheyenne management procured wild horses by offering a $50 prize for the "worst bucker" entered by ranchmen.

Steamboat, bought by John C. Coble of Bosler, Wyoming, appeared first at Cheyenne and easily won the purse. Coble gave him to the Elks Club at Cheyenne. Later he was acquired by Charley Irwin, who operated a traveling show and supplied broncs to Cheyenne and a few other more recently organized rodeos.

LIKE Midnight, Steamboat was big and tough. Neither knew how to quit. Midnight was all black. Steamboat was black, with white stockings on his hind legs and a dab of white on one foreleg.

In 1914, when twenty years old, Steamboat suffered a leg injury in a boxcar and was destroyed. His carcass was left on the city dump at Cheyenne, although some would have you believe he is buried at Cheyenne's Frontier Park.

No adequate comparison of the bucking voltage of the two broncs is possible because few accurate records were kept in Steamboat's day, and such rules as existed were of the sketchiest nature. Usually the contestant was told merely, "Ride 'im slick, like a cowboy, and don't pull leather."

Sometimes a judge would fire his pistol when, in his opinion, the cowboy had made a "good ride." In many instances the rider was required to stay in the saddle until the bronc hiked its head, the equine equivalent of saying "uncle."

Steamboat was ridden by Verne Elliott, Dick Stanley, Ed McCarty, Frank Schneider, Thomas F. Minor and perhaps

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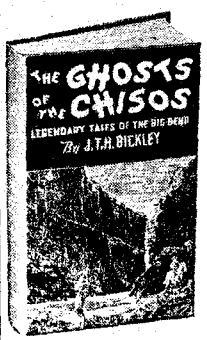
Western Americana



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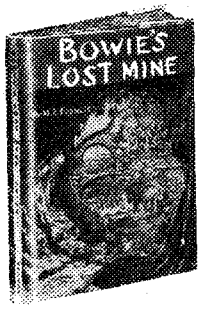

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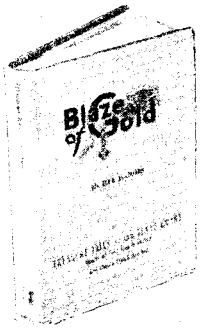

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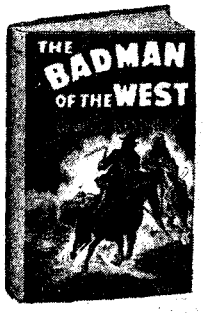

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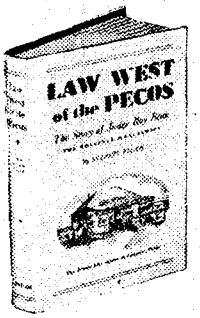

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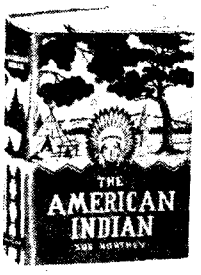

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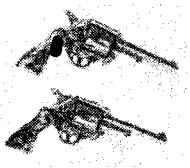

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Buckingest Bronc

(Continued from preceding page)

by others. Verne rates Midnight the better horse.

'Way back in the early eighties, when Jim Kid was in his prime, he bore the reputation of being the only rider who never had been thrown. The old-timers like to speculate as to what might have happened had the unthrowable rider tangled with an unridable horse like Steamboat or Midnight.

Jim Kid, christened James G. Willoughby, for years was the top-hand bronco buster with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. He accompanied the Bill show to Paris and there won a $10,000 bet for Colonel Cody by taming an "unridable" French stallion. Years later he died in California under the hoofs of a mankilling horse.

On November 5, 1936, Verne Elliott found twenty-one-year-old Midnight dead in the pasture. The old warrior is buried on Verne's ranch near Johnstown, Colorado.

When the word was passed that the gallant old bronc was bucking his way down yon side of the divide, it found the rodeo boys holed up in ranch bunk houses for the winter.

Most of the time the typical rodeo rider is as talkative as a hen that has just laid an egg. But there are times when his lip is buttoned, and this was one of those times. When they heard the Midnight bronc had cashed in his chips, most of 'em said nothing, but just turned their backs, the way you do when the campfire smoke smarts your eyes.

If you savvy cowboy lingo, you'll know what one rider meant when he said:

"Midnight was the kind of a hoss that you could go to the end of the trail for."

That says it all.

Meet Forbes Parkhill!

Sources: Verne Elliott, owner of Midnight; Rodeo Association of America; the late Chris Cusack of the National Western Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Biography: At the age of two, or thereabouts, Parkhill's mother and his Aunt Mary took him with them in the surrey on a Sunday when they brought cakes and other delicacies from the Will Dunn ranch to the roundup crew at the edge of Colorado's Black Forest. His most vivid childhood memory is of the women screaming and snatching him into their arms, merely because he was poking a coiled rattlesnake with a two-foot stick.

Forbes Parkhill

In that same surrey, while her menfolk battled a midnight blaze destroying a neighboring ranchhouse, his Aunt Mary drove the pregnant wife of the neighbor through the sub-zero night to a place of safety at the Dunn ranch and dropped dead of a heart attack.

A native of Denver, Parkhill has contributed fact and fiction to the Saturday Evening Post, Collier's and many other periodicals, and is the author of books, fact and fiction, dealing with the West. He is a member and former sheriff (president) of the Denver Posse of The Westerners and is a member of the Western Writers of America.

His newest book, THE LAW GOES WEST, to be published by Sage Books in April, consists largely of hitherto unpublished source material on frontier life drawn from records of the Colorado Territorial Court prior to 1876.

Queen of the Utes

(Continued from page 19)

who advocated peace with the whites, was favored by Washington. He won over sub-chief Ignacio, who wanted an all-out war on the whites.

Immediately following Ouray's election, Congress summoned him to Washington to parley his people onto the small, desolate reservations. The chief obeyed the summons, knowing that it would break his heart to agree to any such plan. Yet, with clear understanding, he realized that senseless opposition to the Government could result only in certain annihilation for the Utes. Sadly he told the Indian Agent, Charlie Adams, of his decision. "Tell the Great White Father that Ouray will come to Washington. He will smoke the pipe."

No Indian had ever attained a higher pinnacle of wisdom and ethics with less contributing factors than had Ouray, who had never seen a white man's school. Many a struggling settler owed his survival to the unstinted charity of Ouray and Chipeta. And no woman's school ever turned out a more compassionate person or a sweeter personality than Ute Queen, Chipeta.

Chief Ouray and his consort were barbarically picturesque. They had clung, in most part, to their tribal dress. But, as their journey neared Washington, they sought to adopt civilized dress. News of this preceded them to the Capitol, and dressmakers and tailors were alerted to assist them in a choice of apparel the moment they arrived.

Then came the thrilling moment of their arrival in Washington. Out of the smoke-stained tepees of the Los Pinos Agency, bedecked in gaudy beaded moccasins, colorful turquoise jewelry, enveloped in the romantic aura of their wild mountain life, the Chief and his Queen stepped off the pale-faces' Fire Wagon. The bedlam of their parade through the city can only be imagined.

Washington respected the intelligent, dignified Ouray, but Chipeta it idolized. The gaudy finery associated with her savage life on the reservation was tossed aside. Off came her fine moccasins, her beautiful earrings, her strands of multi-colored beads, her enormous rings. Walking in high-heeled shoes was a nightmare, but Chipeta's tutors were patient. Soon she was not merely an Indian Queen—a curiosity, but the hit of upper-crust Washington society. She was the rage of a glittering social season. The special artists of the illustrated journals sketched her, and she was the season's biggest attraction on their pages.

THE dances she was taught were thrillingly different from the mere wiggle that restricted the squaws on the reservation. In the pale-face dances she had a man partner all to herself—and men in groups besieged her with flattering attentions.

It was said that a bachelor doctor lost his heart to her. He sought her out dance after dance, whispered ardently to her while moving about the floor. His only response was an enigmatic look

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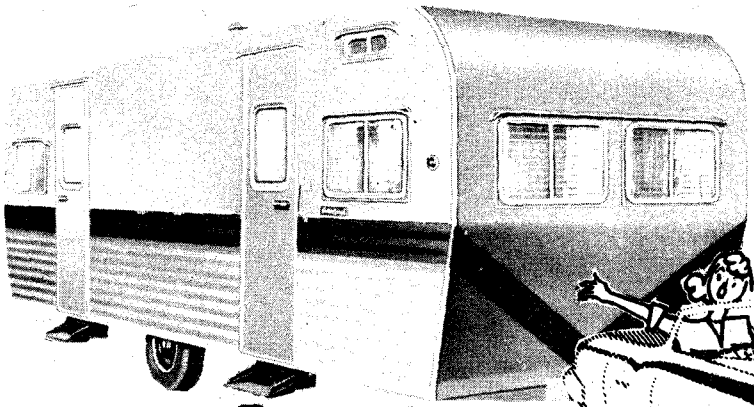

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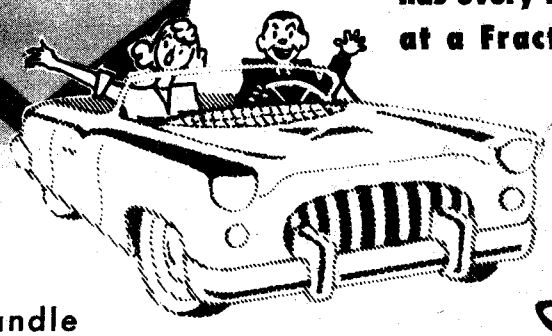

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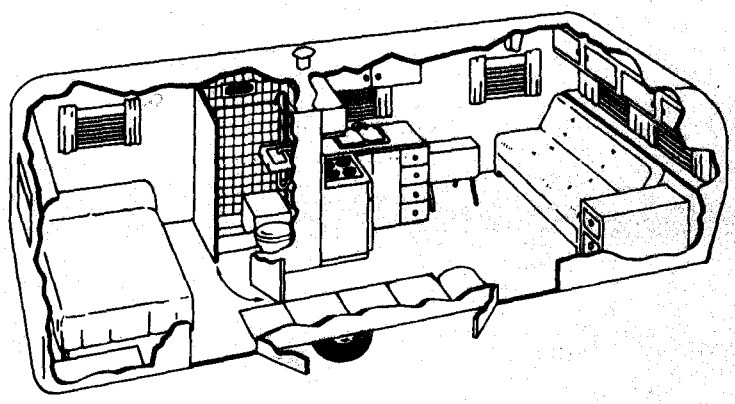

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from her black eyes. Perhaps, as she listened to his pretty speeches, Chipeta was musing how ridiculous this white medicine man would look squatted on bear hides in a smoked-up tepee, dragging up wood for a fire, or trying to ride a wild pony!

On March 6, 1880, the treaty was signed. At once Ouray began preparations to return to his people. Chipeta was ready to go. It had been a wonderful experience, but the galling corset had robbed her supple body of its accustomed freedom, her small feet were sore from the white women's stiff shoes and her pale-face coiffeur itched her head and set her to scratching vigorously—an unpardonable luxury in circumscribed white civilization. In short, Queen Chipeta was fed up with Washington society.

With her head awhirl from the lavish feting, petting and pampering she had received, still decked out in pale-face finery, her arms loaded with expensive gifts, she and Ouray climbed into the snorting Fire Wagon and waved goodbye to the white man's wonderland.

The Agent at Los Pinos had spread the word of the home-coming. From all over the reservation came the lean ponies with their grimy, blanketed riders. Old men with iron-gray braids and sad eyes, fiery young braves and giggling girls, and many squaws with numerous papooses clinging to their skirts. Their chief and queen were coming home. What "medicine" would they bring from the mysterious land of the pale-faces?

Washington had made big pow-wow about Chipeta, the Agent told the squaws. Instead of faces wreathed in smiles at this news, there was the narrowing of eyes of the ill-clad squaws. In ominous silence the assembled Indians awaited the arrival of their leaders.

When the stage rattled in, the crowd gathered close about the unloading platform. Ouray stepped out first, wearing the familiar garb of the reservation. But when Chipeta bounced out of the stage, there was a subdued chorus of guttural "Ughs" from the squaws. She was clothed in much of the tainted frills and silks of the pale-faces. Envy sent every squaw to her tepee in smothered jealousy.

After many councils with the sub-chiefs the new treaty was grudgingly accepted, but in acceptance it split the Ute people asunder. No longer could the young braves follow the hunting trails of their nomadic forefathers. Now they would be escorted to their dreary reservations by the U. S. Cavalry and confined within definite boundaries in southwest Colorado and Utah.

Just after the signing of the treaty by the principal sub-chiefs, Ouray died. He may have—as it was said in council—died because he did not wish to live a captive, but in any case he was spared the heartbreaking exodus of his people to the reservations. Many Utes held a grudge against their head chief and his "sell-out" queen.

The inviolable custom of the Utes bound the widow of a chief to perpetual mourning. She must keep to her tepee at the outskirts of the village attended only by squaws. An empty future for Chipeta, who had tasted of the privileges of her pale-face sisters. Her womanhood rebelled.

COLOROW, the Government's biggest Ute problem and the most troublesome sub-chief in Ute government, began visiting the tepee of the widowed Chipeta—the "lodge of mourning." He ardently solicited her influence in raising a rebel band which he would head for a bold return to the forbidden White River hunting grounds.

This alone clouded Chipeta's hitherto stainless reputation. Her final tribal ostracism was to follow quickly.

A handsome young brave, who doubted the sincerity of the bereaved widow's mourning, began openly courting Chipeta. The squaws of the tribe did the rest. Soon the head men had her banished as an outcast—a woman without honor. She married her young brave, and both joined Colorow's band of insurgents.

Colorow and his band soon spread panic along the path toward his cherished hunting grounds on White River, with the sheriff's posse and the troops close on their heels. Sheriff Kendall, of Garfield County, and his posse ran into Colorow's "squaw camp" unexpectedly, and—knowing the tepees contained only women and children—fired mercilessly into them. For some time it was believed that Chipeta met death by the cowardly volley, but she escaped.

The renegade Utes made their way to the Uncompahgre reservation in Utah, where they were welcomed by their kinsmen. There Chipeta remained until her death in 1924 at the approximate age of eighty.

Her body was brought back to Colorado by a group of admiring Montrose citizens and placed in a beautiful mausoleum on the old home-site where she and Ouray had formerly lived. A monument was erected to them, and a concrete tepee built over the spring where

(Continued on following page)

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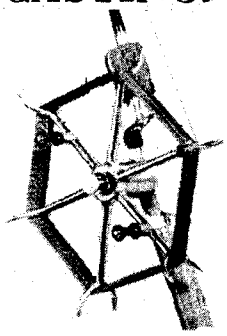

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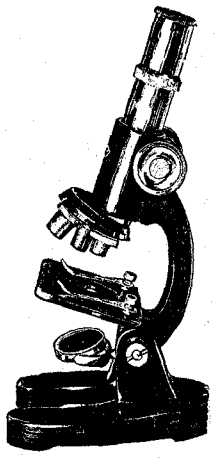

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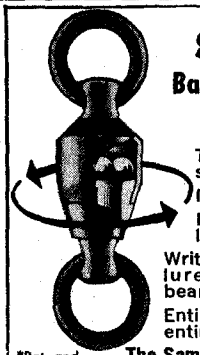

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Queen of the Utes

(Continued from preceding page)

they had got their water. Several acres were set aside for the site, which is called Ouray Memorial Park.

Few women of the West attained a brighter reputation for charity and good deeds to both white and red man alike, with no thought of reward, than did this diminutive Indian queen. The halls of fame knew her not, history has but a line for her. But in the gallery of outstanding American women belongs a dusky face—Chipeta, Queen of the Utes.

Buffalo Comeback

(Continued from page 11)

ing on advice of outside specialists, the Dominion Parks Branch began a systematic killing off of a percentage of the surplus animals. More important, from 1925 to 1928 four large shipments, totalling 6,673 head, were sent north to join the wild wood buffalo in their newly established range.

At once there came protests from a few mammalian scientists. This very small group declared that by turning the plains buffalo into the wood buffalo range, the two types would mingle and in a few years the rare species of *Bos Athabascae* (wood buffalo) would be submerged. The Government very sensibly ignored the protests of these purists. Actually, as events proved, the interbreeding of the two species was exceedingly beneficial to the future of the race. 657 difficult miles of land and water travel separated Wainwright Park from the Wood Buffalo Park in the far Northwest Territories, home of the last herd of wild buffalo left on earth. The water route was the most difficult, as the rivers to be traversed were dotted with dangerous sandbars.

How the situation was handled is best described by O. S. Finnie, a man with a lifetime of experience in Northern Canada. His story is here told briefly to the writer:

THE moving of the animals began late in June, 1925, over the long rail and water route. The destination was La Butte, a point on the Slave River which forms an eastern boundary of Wood Buffalo Park. The first thing done was the building of substantial corrals at the point of departure, Wainwright. These were specially arranged by dividing into compartments for the purpose of segregating the yearlings and two-year-olds. A "squeeze" was also installed. Each transported buffalo was first branded with the letter P to distinguish it from the wood buffalo. Weekly shipments of animals in lots of 200 to 250 were made in suitable weather over the next three years. The sex proportion was approximately five cows to one bull. Special stock cars were prepared, divided for proper feeding and watering. The 400 mile railroad journey required 48 hours.

"At La Butte, point of entry to the new home, specially constructed corrals had also been prepared in advance. Into these the buffalo were unloaded and rested 36 hours before beginning the 257 mile river passage."

Waiting beside the chutes were docked two light draft river barges specially designed to convey the animals in the best possible manner and get over the dangerous sandbars, which repeatedly delayed passage on both the Clearwater and Slave Rivers.

These light draft barges were pushed by equally light draft motor vessels. Usually the trip was made in four days, but the boat crews took it easy with the buffalo for cargo. Toward the end of the water phase of the journey, the well-fed buffaloes became so tame they would eat from the hands of their keepers.

At the landing point a different type of special chute had been constructed so that the barges could be moved endways right onto the chute, forming a safe continuous runway from the deck to the river bank.

The barge in place, the pen gates were opened and the buffalo galloned to their new home—a wilderness paradise which they could never overgraze.

So well have the plains buffalo flourished in this new environment that the 1954 count placed the number of the combined herds at 15,000.

The herd in the fenced 170 mile area of Wainwright National Park increased so fast that by 1921 selective killing was forced upon the men in charge of the experiment in addition to shipping alive the 6,673 animals to Wood Buffalo Park.

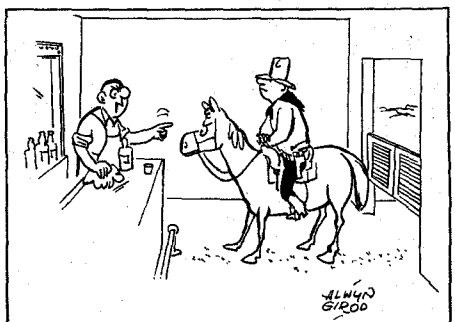
A roar went up when press dispatches announced that the buffalo must be thinned out on a fairly large scale. From all over Canada denunciation of this killing poured in by letter and wire. People in all walks of life, young and old, believed that the killing of the animals should be stopped. Though all the people protesting had absolutely no information on, or understanding of, the true situation with which the Government buffalo experimenters were faced, these protests continued to come in for many years. These died out altogether upon the arrival of the great depression of 1931-33.

Then, the unknowing far-sightedness of the Government experiment in bringing back the buffalo was shown in a convincing manner. Between 1931-33 the Government supplied 670,000 pounds of fresh buffalo meat free to needy people. In addition, the sale of the hides brought a substantial return in an exceedingly costly achievement.

However, from a standpoint of scientific curiosity, it is interesting to note that scientists estimate over 40,000 buffalo would be roaming Canadian preserves today had not the thinning-out process taken place. On this basis, formulated on a 40% increase, 600,000 buffalo would be the 1994 census.

This is a pleasant outlook—that the buffalo once more will roam in great numbers. It brings to mind that strange prophecy repeated by all the prairie Indians for centuries:

The buffalo will disappear; the buffalo will return!



"You've got a nerve! Make him wipe his feet!"

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Truly Western

NORMNOTE:

As boss wrangler of TRULY WESTERN, we are hereby dedicating a corner of this department each issue to the few real old-timers—the boys who have actually seen the old West and lived in it. We'll call it OLD-TIMERS' CORRAL, and are looking forward to hearing from all you real mossy-horns. One word of warning, however. TRUE WEST gets hundreds of letters every month, and we just don't have space to print 'em all. We'll try to pick out the most interesting and if your letter doesn't appear, try to understand our space problems and forgive us. The following letters, from Dave Clemmons and Gene Robertson, start off OLD-TIMERS' CORRAL this issue—NBW.

When The War-Whoop Sounded In Oregon

Editor, TRUE WEST:

While scanning the *Evening Statesman* of the 30th of November, I chanced to see an article about a dead man found at the old Crowley Ranch, situated on Crowley Creek in Southeastern Oregon—Malheur County.

Brings back to me what happened there in the days of the Nez Perce Indian War. This incident was told me by an old-timer that was at the Crowley Ranch, name of Jim Streeter. He was employed by the Star cow outfit as a wagoner. The Crowley Ranch belonged to old man Crowley.

On this day, the boys had corralled a bunch of cattle in the old rock corral. They intended branding the calves after finishing up lunch, but the Nez Perce changed their plans. A band of warriors rode up outside and began whooping and firing their guns in the air. Jim Streeter went to the door, and asked what in hell was going on. Chief Egan told Streeter, "You boys had better leave, as I don't know how long I can hold my warriors off."

Jim and the boys quickly took the hint. They turned the cattle out of the corral, rounded up their saddle horses and headed for the White Horse Ranch. Whooping like devils, the Indians took in after them. The boys were leading extra mounts, well trained saddle horses, so they changed mounts to keep ahead of the warriors. The Indians ran them right to the White Horse Ranch, where all the settlers and ranchers that had escaped the Indians had gathered. It sure was a close call.

I worked many days as a vaquero with Jim Streeter, after Jim lost his own outfit. Jim lost all his cattle and saddle horses during the hard winter of 1888. When I knew him, later that year, he was working for Billie Jones on the Malheur River just down river from Junctura, Oregon. Later I worked with him at the Harper Ranch. Jim and I vaqueroed for the old Harper outfit for some time. Jim was a man of sixty or more, but tough as a railroad spike—a real old-timer. The grand old boys of those days are all gone now, but I am glad that I was privileged to know them and work with them. I am 77 years old. If you see fit to print these few lines, I will be grateful to you. TRUE WEST is tops in the Western magazine field. I shall remain your faithful reader the rest of my days.—Dave Clemmons, RD No. 3, 3128 Neff Street, Boise, Idaho.

He Worked for the Dalton Brothers

Dear Editor:

As I used to work for the Dalton brothers back in the old days, I have a few words to say—words that you folks might not like to hear. Why don't you print the TRUE story of the James and Dalton boys?

Your writers say that Grat Dalton is dead, killed at Coffeyville, Kansas, in 1892. Well, *I* say that Grat Dalton is still alive! I last saw Grat at Deming, New Mexico, in September, 1946. Several other persons were with me at the time, so it was no pipe dream.

In 1948, Jesse was here in Guthrie, Oklahoma, after stopping at Lawton for a while. Hundreds of old-timers came to see him, and also Jesse James III. Roscoe James was there, and many other Jameses and Daltons. Some of Frank James' children also came to see their uncle.

Now TRUE WEST, the magazine that proudly brags on its front cover "All True, All Fact—Stories of the real West"—I am going to repeat my challenge:

WHY DON'T YOU PRINT THE TRUE STORY OF THE JAMES AND DALTON BOYS?

For your information, Jesse James died of natural causes on August 15, 1951, in Texas—NOT in 1882 at St. Joe, Missouri.—Eugene E. Robertson, 706 South Capitol Blvd, Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Note of Appreciation

Dear Norm:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my warmest thanks and appreciation to TRUE WEST for kindly publishing a photograph of a group of Indian Police in the October issue, containing the likeness of my father, Ben C. Collins. In my letter accompanying the photo, I asked for letters from any one knowing any of the people in the picture. The response was amazing and gratifying—far greater than I had hoped for. I received letters from all parts of the West, and am still receiving them. I want all these good folks to know that I deeply appreciate their friendly letters, and I promise that I will answer them all as soon as possible. I enclose samples of some of the interesting letters I received.—Dan H. Collins, 2103 Newfield Lane, Austin, Texas.

Excerpts from Letters to Mr. Collins

"...I never knew you boys, but your father and I were good friends and worked together. The picture was taken at Wagner, Oklahoma. I am 75 years old, and live with my wife at Canoga Park, California. I knew your grandfather Collins and your Uncle Dan, but I don't know if any of these people in the picture are still living.—Jim Collins, 8740 Vairel Avenue, Canoga Park, California.

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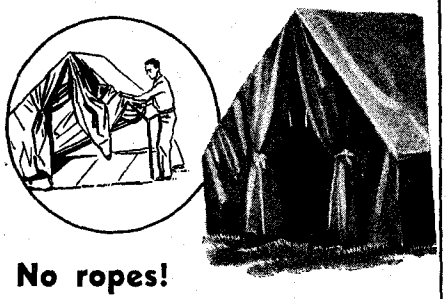

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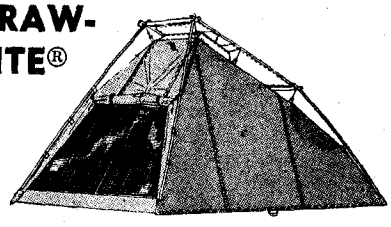

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Truly Western

(Continued from preceding page)

"...I remember distinctly the tragedy of the ambushing of your father, at which time I was working in a lumber mill at Eubanks. I also knew Sweeney Folsom, who appears in the picture. That photo surely brought back nostalgic memories of those early days in Indian Territory. The streets of the little frontier towns were unpaved, the stores were all false-fronts, and the sidewalks were raised board-walks. AND—believe it or not—it cost a white man about twenty-five cents a month to live there. No wonder they call them "the good old days!"—James A. Thomas, Box 539, Shawnee, Oklahoma.

Modoc Chief

Dear Mr. Gipson:

I wonder if TRUE WEST would publish the enclosed picture? I had it copied from an old picture owned by Judge Frank Adams of this city. The caption on the back reads: "Ben Lawyer" or "Yellow Hammer," chief of Modocs in Indian Territory, 1906.

The Modocs sent to Indian Territory after the murder of General Canby in 1873 were a sad, disheartened group who constantly implored the agent to send them back home to Oregon. Only a few people of Modoc blood now live near

Yellow Hammer, also known as "Ben Lawyer," was chief of the Modocs in Indian Territory, 1906.

the Quapaw Agency, but old-timers still talk of driving across "Modoc Prairie" ten miles west of Miami, and hearing the pitiful wailing of the old Indian women as they wept to return to their own tribal home in Oregon.

Judge Adams has a bow and arrow that Yellow Hammer made for him as a gift, after the Judge had got him out of some marital difficulty.—(Mrs.) Velma Nieberding, Box 201, Miami, Oklahoma.

U.S. Marshal Bill Tilghman's Widow Writes

Dear Mr. Gipson:

Here is a letter of comment that may interest you.

First, I wish to congratulate you on the increasing authenticity of your material. It is interesting, of course, to read some of the yarns that credulous and well-meaning persons write. But old men's—and old wives'—tales are not always history. More Western writers are making real research and are writing accounts that can generally be verified. They also recognize possible errors or uncertainties, for history can never be hard-and-fast like an algebraic equation. Any historical writer worth his typewriter knows that.

Such a writer must know how to find records and how to compare and check any information with known dates and facts to come to the ultimate truth. He must also know how to estimate probabilities where two or more seemingly authenticated facts are known.

It is amusing and sometimes pathetic to read some of these yarns. Often the writers will give themselves away. Thus one self-styled warrior talks knowingly of settlers with corn-fields in the Cherokee Strip in the 1880's; and of a family killed by Indians (whom he avenged). Another "oldtimer" speaks of meeting a man at the Gladstone Hotel in Arkansas City, Kansas, three or four years before the hotel was built. A neat trick, that! Another curiously deluded gent tells of "talking with a man who had seen the killing of the Daltons at Coffeyville," several years before that event took place. That bloody date in Western history is certainly an established fact. This man held a U.S. Deputy Marshal's commission "signed by Judge Parker himself." A dead give-away, since U.S. Judges NEVER signed such commissions. It was not their business to do so.

A letter in the February issue of T.W. challenges you to publish "some of the truth."

Could it be permitted to ask the writer to elucidate some of the "truth" in the letter? My purpose in raising this issue is not just to expose the writer personally, but here is a good example of how one can check stories. The Editors of TRUE WEST know the method, I am sure, but many of your readers do not and will find it of interest.

"No one can convince me," the letter states, "that Jesse James was killed by Bob Ford." However, she or anyone else interested may find in a library the *Pictorial History of the Wild West*, by J. D. Horan and Paul Sann, and note pp 44 and 244. Observe that in the photo this lady's "real Jesse James" holds his gun with arm extended. Probably she would not catch the significance of that, but real oldtimers will understand. The text is also illuminating.

There are other statements in the letter that bear questioning: A Toledo train hold-up is mentioned. Just when did this occur? Does it check with known dates of the James' Gang's activities at this period? They *may* have been in another part of the country on that date.

How come the hold-up was on the Canadian National Railroad, which does not and did not operate in the U.S.? A train would have to cross Lake Michigan or a sizable part of the state of Michigan to even touch Canadian soil!

How could a "saddle tramp" carry $80,000 in coins, concealed on a horse? (It was coins, probably part in silver, as reference to the Geiger counter indicates.) How much does that amount of "hard money" weigh? The letter stated that "Jesse James" confidently advised a Geiger counter to aid in locating the

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buried loot. Does not this correspondent know that a Geiger counter is only responsive to radio-active minerals?

To digress for a moment, but in line with our general discussion:

Al Jennings never has dared to dispute or to bring suit against the facts spoken and printed about him, and presented in a motion picture, by William M. Tilghman, Chris Madsen and Bud Ledbetter. Jennings knows these facts can be proven by records showing his *four-month* career as an outlaw. The only loot the gang acquired from an express train robbery was a two-gallon jug of whiskey and a bunch of bananas! They got about $400 from the passengers.—(Mrs.) Zoe A. Tilghman, 3130 No. Barnes, Oklahoma City 12, Okla.

Author Writes TRUE WEST

Editor TRUE WEST:

I received the copies of TRUE WEST containing my article on Kid Curry. I find that someone in your organization has done a rewrite of it. As a result, the ending of the piece is a mess of misstatements which I didn't write. I can't figure out whether this was done to pep up the article or whether possibly you have a new source of information. You will undoubtedly get letters from your readers on this point, so I consider that it needs clarification.

Curry was not shot, according to all accounts and the law. He was never seen after his escape in Tennessee, and supposedly got away to South America. He would now be—according to one old-timer who met him—in his 80's if still living.—C. N. Kirk, 6909 Dogwood, Baltimore 7, Md.

TRUE WEST'S Reply to Mr. Kirk

Dear Mr. Kirk:

Referring to your letter on your Kid Curry article:

Your article met with an unfortunate set of circumstances. You did not send your sources with the piece, so we had no way of checking its accuracy except through our own sources. These stated that Harvey Logan (Kid Curry) was shot as stated in the printed version in TRUE WEST. We did attempt to reach you by letter before rewriting the article, but evidently the letter never reached you as we received no reply.

You state that Curry was not shot, "according to all accounts." Whose accounts, and are these accounts documented? The accounts that we were able to find stated that Curry shot himself near Parachute, Colorado, after he and two companions had robbed a train there in June, 1904. You state he "supposedly got away to South America," therefore you are not certain and have no facts to prove it.

We knew of the tale of Curry's escaping to South America; we also knew of his supposed death by suicide in Colorado. We could not get positive proof to support either statement, so we went along with the suicide version. We realized that the story of Kid Curry's finish would be hotly disputed, no matter which way we printed it. We hope that our readers will help us clarify the mystery. Informative letters will be published in TRUE WEST, so that all writers, historians, and serious students of Western Americana may benefit from whatever nuggets of truth may be disclosed. That is our standard procedure

(Continued on following page)

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Truly Western

(Continued from preceding page)

on all controversial articles; as, for example, Barney Barnard's story on Jacob Walzer and his Lost Mine. That is the ONLY way we can ever get the truth or somewhere near the truth on many figures of the old West.

Our purpose in publishing your letter together with our reply is solely to bring this problem into the open. We believe that our readers will be interested in knowing that TRUE WEST'S steadfast and only policy is to get the TRUTH, no matter from what source or in what manner. We cannot reiterate this too often.—Norman B. Wiltsey, Research Editor.

First Reader Reaction to the Curry Article

Gentlemen:

I submit the following for publication in your TRULY WESTERN section:

I read with interest Mr. C. N. Kirk's article, "Kid Curry's Wild Bunch," in the February issue of TRUE WEST. Although Mr. Kirk's article is not without fact, there are several points which should be straightened out for the benefit of those who rely on TRUE WEST to present facts.

First: Concerning Mr. Kirk's statements as to the personnel of the gang. Butch Cassidy was never a member of a gang fronted by Harvey Logan, alias Kid Curry. Though the two men were associated during the latter part of their careers, Cassidy was the real leader of the Wild Bunch.

Logan had been a member of Nate Champion's Powder Springs gang, the leadership of which fell to Flat Nose George Curry after Champion's death. Butch Cassidy had already established fame as an outlaw when the Curry gang raided the bank of Belle Fourche, North Dakota, June 28, 1897. The gang escaped from this raid with nothing but their lives.

Cassidy and Logan probably became acquainted sometime later, while both were hiding out in the Hole-in-the-Wall section of Wyoming.

Kirk also states that Big Nose George was a member of the gang which Kid Curry headed. However, the man generally referred to as Big Nose George was hanged in Rawlins, Wyoming, in 1881—fourteen years prior to the time of his supposed membership in the Wild Bunch.

Next, Kirk mentions that Kid Curry's brother, Lonnie Logan, was caught and killed after the Great Northern train robbery near Malta, Montana. (This was actually the Wagner train robbery, July 3, 1901) As a matter of fact, Lonnie was shot and killed by officers February 28, 1900, near Dodson, Missouri, more than a year before the Montana robbery.

Kid Curry was captured December 15, 1901, in Knoxville, Tennessee; not in 1903, as stated in the article. He escaped from the jail on June 27, 1903, while awaiting transportation to the Ohio State Penitentiary. After breaking jail, it is assumed by some that Curry intended to join Butch Cassidy and Harry Longabaugh in South America. Lacking funds for the trip, he attempted the robbery at Parachute, Colorado, on July 7, 1903. It is said that he was killed during this hold-up. To my knowledge, however, this report was never confirmed.

By these statements, I mean no offense to Mr. Kirk. I am merely a great fan of Butch Cassidy and his Wild Bunch, and hate to have anyone suggest that he was led by the likes of Kid Curry.—D. H. Vance, Box 157, Provo, Utah.

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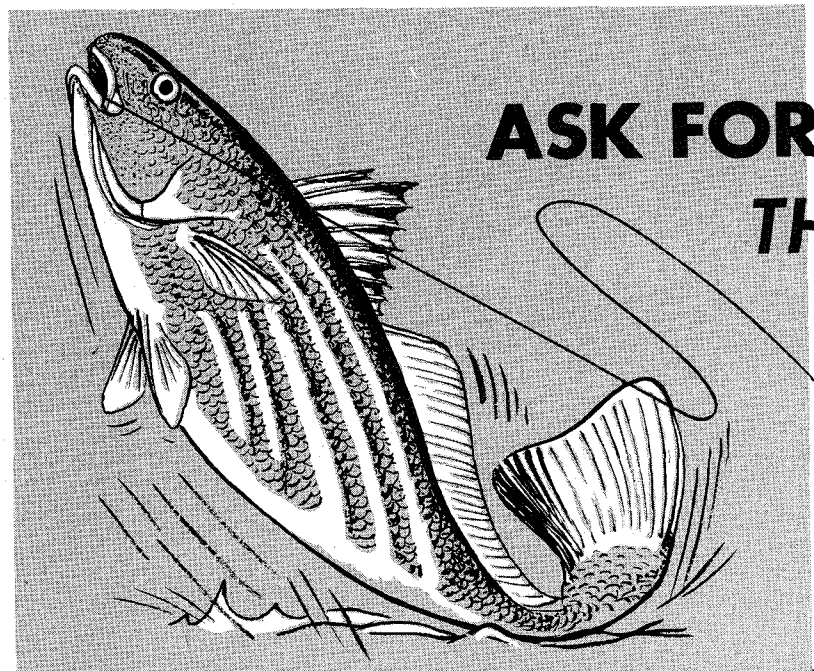

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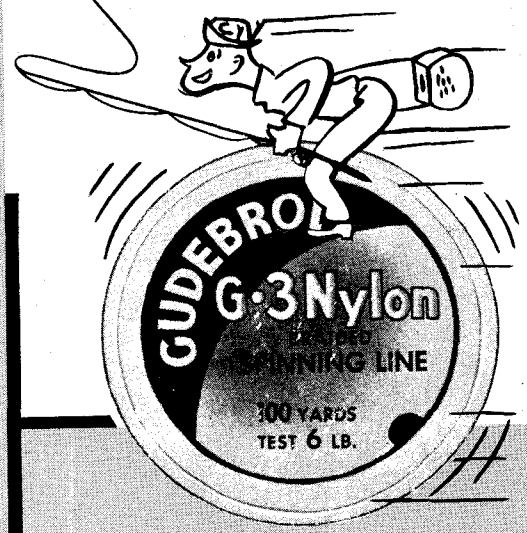

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